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ABSTRACT

This student guide is intended to assist persons employed as supervisors in improving their ability to organize and manage work teams. Discussed in the first four sections are the following topics: groups and work teams (work groups, types of groups, work teams, and the effect of the workplace on groups); individuals in groups (the individual, personality, perception, motivation, and social influences); influences in groups (norms, group roles, and power and influence); and procedures for building a work team (development of a work team, orientation, conflict, cohesion, and team development). Each of these sections contains an introduction, instructional text that is interspersed with reinforcing learning activities, and a section summary. The fifth part of the guide includes a series of performance checks (an end check, a tutor check, and a work-based project). A unit review, which also includes a description of related extension courses and resources, concludes the guide. (MN)

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An Open Tech Project

SUPERVISING

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF SUPERVISION

13: Workteams

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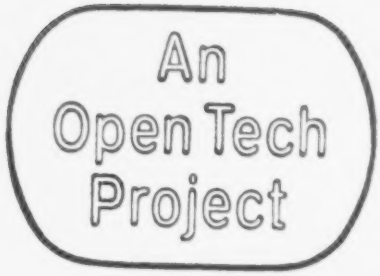
13: WORKTEAMS

Ysanne Carlisle



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Ysanne Carlisle
Workteams (Number 13 in the CHOICE SERIES of learning units)

Series Editor: Harry V Pardue
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WORKING GUIDE TO THIS UNIT IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

This Unit is now your personal property - it's not for handing back to your training officer or to a tutor. It is your working book.

The Contents will increase in value to you each time you write on one of its pages. This is a working text for your personal notes - without notes its value is limited.

Qualifications forget about certificates and diplomas - you don't need them for this programme. What you do need is the wish:-

* to do your job better
* for personal development

Your study time is really up to you - we guess you will need about 8 hours in total. But it's your time - spend as long as you like.

How am I doing? you can judge for yourself by checking out how well you cope with the tasks we call Activities and Self Checks which occur throughout the unit. You can also get the Tutor Check and/or the Work Based Project to your tutor for an unbiased view of your progress.

Work Pace it's really up to you and depends on your interest. However, if you do well on the Activities and Self Checks, you could afford to speed up a little. Of course, if you don't do as well as you expect then you could slow down a little or flick back into the unit for a quick review of the more difficult ideas.

When in doubt - ask or seek help from:

* your family and friends
* colleagues at work
* your company training staff
* other open learners
* your tutor, by phone, by a visit to your support centre or by dropping your tutor a line through the post.

Don't worry if what you learn doesn't seem to be of use to you now, remember that times change - it may be useful one day. Anyway, just knowing more improves personal confidence.

So now make a start:-

13: WORKTEAMS by Ysanne Carlisle

ABOUT THIS UNIT

As a supervisor you will almost certainly have a group of people to lead. But would you say that group is a workteam?

Members of a workteam work together to achieve the same result. This doesn't come about simply because they do similar jobs in the same workplace: it takes understanding and skilful leadership and a willingness to cooperate from everybody concerned.

In this unit we'll be looking at what makes a workteam, at the pressures and influences which can help the people who work for you to operate as a workteam.

IN THIS UNIT WE WILL

* identify the features of a workteam and see how they are affected by different circumstances
* examine the contribution that individual members make to the workteam
* examine how a workteam can be built up
* develop ways of handling conflict in the workteam.

AUDIO TAPE Side 1

Before you continue through the unit, you should listen to side 1 of the audio tape that accompanies the unit. You will find it useful if you refer to the unit objectives shown below whilst you listen to the tape. You may wish to make the objectives clearer to yourself by making a note or two on the page as you listen.

OBJECTIVES

When you have completed this unit you will be BETTER ABLE to:

* assess how individuals and the nature of the workplace affect workteams
* deal with the group forces which affect the performance of a workteam
* build up an effective team of people working together to achieve the same things
* handle conflict positively.

PART A GROUPS AND WORKTEAMS

1 Introduction

In this part of the unit, we'll look at some of the types of group we find at work and we'll try to identify what it is that makes a workteam a special kind of group.

2 Workgroups

Let's begin by thinking about what we mean by a group. It's a word we're all familiar with and use in everyday speech. Here are some examples of what might be called groups

- families
- a sports team
- the members of a chess club
- task groups at work.

ACTIVITY 1
Time guide
2 mins

Jot down two more examples of groups you belong to or know of.

* _____
* _____

The possible list is endless:

* club members
* workteam members
* committees
* your circle of friends.

REFERENCE 1
page 98

There are various ways in which we could define a group. If you decide to dip in to this reference you'll find several suggestions.

In this unit we're interested in ties between people that arise because of work, and the type of group we're interested in is the workgroup. We're going to make three assumptions about workgroups.

We'll assume:

* the people in workgroups have working relations with each other. They know who they work for and who they supervise and, broadly, what their job is

* members of the workgroup are in contact with each other and able to influence each other's work and opinions

* workgroups comprise a fairly small number of people - perhaps as many as one person can supervise.

SELF CHECK 1
Time guide
3 mins

In our discussion of groups so far we've pointed out some things which we'd expect to be a feature of a workgroup. Jot down two of those features.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. Workgroups are collections of people who * have some kind of working relationship with each other * have some common ties or interests connected with work * have some contact with each other, that is they interact with each other * can influence each other because they interact * are normally part of smallish groups rather than very large ones.

Any two from the above would be a suitable response to our self check.

So, we've listed the features we'd expect to find in a workgroup. In the next section we'll look at some of the different types of groups we'd expect to find at work.

3 Types of Group

We can identify a number of groups at work which are quite different from each other - perhaps because of the work they do (for example a production group as opposed to a sales group) or the particular task they have to carry out (for example a group selling household equipment in one department of a multiple store as opposed to another group selling food). Equally one group, by the nature of the job, may spend a lot of time in meetings, another group may spend a lot of time travelling or on an outdoor site or in a laboratory or under a machine.

Can we find anything in common in the kinds of group we're likely to come across at work?

Let's look at some of them now.

3.1 Command groups

First of all we can identify groups made up of managers and the people who work for them in all areas of work.

They carry out certain functions and activities which are more or less related and there is a manager in charge. These are called COMMAND GROUPS.

ACTIVITY 2
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down two examples of command groups from your own workplace.

* _____

* _____

The list is as endless as the types of industries and firms there are in existence. However, whether you work in a shop, office, factory, oil rig, farm or whatever, if you've identified a clear group who are managed by one person and those activities are clearly related to each other, that's a command group.

3.2 Committee groups

Another type of group of which you may be a member is a committee. Committees deal with a very wide range of issues - health and safety and staff welfare are just two examples.

ACTIVITY 3
Time guide
2 mins

Jot down what you think is the purpose of committees.

I hope we can agree that the main purpose of committees is to bring people together to exchange ideas and make recommendations or decisions which are better made by more than one person.

3.3 Task groups

You may also be a member of a task group or project team.

These are set up to deal with a particular task or problem. Finding and putting into action a solution to that problem depends upon the members pooling their knowledge and expertise and working together as a team. Once the problem is solved the task group don't usually continue to work together - they are likely to be variously used in other task groups as the need arises.

ACTIVITY 4
Time guide
2 mins

Task groups, or project teams, differ from what we normally regard as workteams in one major respect. Jot down what you think that is.

Depending on your own experience, you may have had several ideas for this activity. The major difference I would choose is that:

* task groups are brought together for one specific task - workteams usually work together permanently.

Having said that, however, perhaps we should mention a special kind of task group, which is an exception to this - quality circles.

Quality circles, which are teams of volunteers set up to identify, examine and solve problems in their own work area, tend to remain together to look at problem after problem. To that extent they are like workteams which also stay together and unlike other kinds of task group.

EXTENSION 1
Page 97

If you'd like to find out more about quality circles, there is another unit in this series which looks at this type of group in detail.

Let's review some of the things we've said about types of group so far with our second self check.

SELF CHECK 2
Time guide
3 mins

Complete each of the sentences below with a suitable word or words.

a) In almost all workplaces we find groups made up of managers and the people who work for them which carry out related activities. These are known as _____ groups.

b) _____ bring people together to exchange ideas, and make recommendations and decisions which are better made by more than one person.

c) _____ _____ are made up of people who work as a team to deal with one specific task or problem.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. a) The term we used to describe this kind of group was 'command group'. b) It is committees which meet to exchange ideas and make decisions which need more than one person's knowledge and skill. c) Either 'project team' or 'task force' would be suitable responses to this question.

3.4 Formal and Informal Groups

The three types of group we've described are set up in the workplace to get the job done, whatever that may involve.

Within those groups the relations between group members are defined by the way the firm is organised. Thus, you know who is in charge, you know what you are responsible for and what other people are responsible for and how their job fits in with yours. Organisations lay down relations which people have with each other at work. They often show them in the form of a diagram called an organisation chart so that people can find out how their jobs fit in with those of other people.

These are known as FORMAL relationships.

They arise purely out of the demands of the job and the way the workplace is organised.

ACTIVITY 5
Time guide
4 mins

To see how what we've said so far applies to your workplace, jot down a list of the formal relationships within which you operate at work.

* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

Obviously I have no way of knowing what you said. I imagine you started with your workteam.

Perhaps then you thought about your formal relationship with your boss? And do you form a formal group with other supervisors? Can you identify your section or department as a formal group? Are you on any committees or special project groups?

Informal groups

When you thought about this activity no doubt you realised that the time you spend operating in formal groups at work in no way accounts for the whole of your day.

Most of us also operate in INFORMAL RELATIONSHIPS at work too.

Perhaps you and another supervisor are interested in using a micro-processor in your section and somebody in Data Processing helps you out with information and know-how; perhaps you need some special arrangements for getting materials issued from stores and you and your stores supervisor have been meeting to try to sort out a system which meets your needs.

You're not bound to do these things but, because of your own interests and the demands of your job as you see it, you've created your own informal group.

And, of course, some of our relationships at work are mainly social.

We develop informal relationships with the people we have lunch with, share jokes with and chat with.

Sometimes friendships develop which go outside the place of work but, in any organisation, informal relations develop between people and operate within and across the formal groups. People communicate with each other informally as well as through the official channels. Informal groups comprise people who come across each other at work and form a group out of liking or some common interest which is nothing to do directly with the main purpose of the workplace.

However, informal relationships may help us to do our job more effectively than we could without them.

We'll see in Part C of this unit that informal groups can affect things like the working atmosphere and also give supervisors a few problems.

ACTIVITY 6
Time guide
2 mins

Are the groups we've identified at work, ie

command groups
committee groups
task groups

FORMAL or INFORMAL?

Give a reason for your choice _____

_____

_____

Command groups, committee groups and task groups are formal groups because they exist only because of the demands of the job and the way the workplace is organised. Relations within the groups and the purpose of being a member of the group is dictated by the organisation.

SELF CHECK 3
Time guide
3 mins

One of the short passages below describes a formal group. The other describes an informal group. Decide which is which by completing the blanks in each with either FORMAL or INFORMAL.

a) _____ groups exist to carry out tasks and activities which will help the organisation achieve the things it wants to achieve. The people in these groups are there for a purpose. They have their tasks and activities to carry out, and there are ways of communicating between them laid down by the organisation.

b) _____ groups develop out of the regular contacts people have with each other at work. Because of these groups people have relations with others and ways of communicating with others which are not laid down by the organisation.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. a) describes formal groups. These are "official", in which official means of communicating are laid down. b) describes informal groups. Informal communications can operate within and across formal groups.

3.5 Reference groups

The last type of group we'll look at here is a

REFERENCE GROUP

This is rather different from the other groups we've looked at because you may not even come into contact with the people who form your reference group though what they do can exert quite a strong influence on the way you behave both at work and in your private life.

A reference group is any group of people whom you compare yourself with or identify with.

For example:

* Civil servants may compare themselves with people doing similar work in industry for the purposes of career structure or pay negotiations. These other people become their reference group.

* People who do specialist jobs, such as personnel work or accountancy, may compare themselves with people doing the same job in other companies. The people they compare themselves with form their reference group.

ACTIVITY 7
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down who you think might be a reference group for these two people.

* a teenager keen on pop music _____

* somebody at work anxious for promotion _____

Clearly one can have a number of reference groups but the first examples which spring to mind are these.

* A teenager is likely to identify with pop idols and may identify with the music, the types of dress and the behaviour.

* Somebody anxious for promotion is likely to identify with people on the level he wants to be. This may mean that he dresses the same way, expresses the same opinions and goes to the same places as people in his reference group.

You can also have negative-reference groups.

These are groups which you would not like to associate with at any price!

You can probably think of several which apply to you. Perhaps if you are over forty you cannot imagine yourself in any circumstances wanting to be a Hell's Angel.

Conversely, if you are a Hell's Angel you actively dislike the idea of yourself as a member of your local Conservative Party.

ACTIVITY 8
Time guide
2 mins

Jot down what purpose you think your reference groups and negative reference groups serve for <u>you</u>.

You may not have used the same words as me but I hope we can agree that reference groups and negative reference groups help us to define ourselves - what we are and what we want to be. And, perhaps equally important, what we don't want to be.

We'll see in Part C how reference groups can be an important influence on people at work.

4 Workteams

Now let's turn to the group which we're mainly concerned with - the workteam.

ACTIVITY 9
Time guide
3 mins

Workteams and task groups have one major similarity and one major difference. Jot down what you think they are.

Major similarity _____

Major difference _____

You may have thought of a number of possibilities but here are those I would single out:

Major similarity: people in a workteam and in a task group need to work together as a team.

Major difference: workteams tend to stay together on a more or less permanent basis but task groups are disbanded once they have achieved whatever they were set up for.

ACTIVITY 10
Time guide
5 mins

Here are three examples of teams, successful and unsuccessful.

When you've read about them, jot down what seem to you to be the three major features of a team.

A football team has a brilliant striker who scores a lot of goals when the balls are fed to him. The results aren't good though because the goal keeper lets in more than the striker can score.

A cardiac arrest team comprising doctors, nurses and porters to move the equipment can, within 45 seconds, get to any patient in the casualty unit who suffers heart failure.

A Formula One racing car's team of mechanics are so well co-ordinated that they can change wheels within 8 seconds.

* _____

* _____

* _____

I hope we can agree that these three examples of workteams have or need these features in common; perhaps your suggestions included some of them.

* they depend on the efforts of everyone to achieve results

* they need to support the efforts of others in the team

* they need members who are willing and trained to cooperate with each other

* the efforts of the team are directed towards a given task eg changing a wheel. That is they're TASK ORIENTED.

* the group is relatively permanent. We said earlier that task groups may do one task then split up. Teams like these may play many football games, deal with many cardiac arrests and change many tyres.

* while the groups are permanent, team members may change from time to time as people retire or change jobs. We use the word DYNAMIC to describe this.

These are characteristics which any workteam should have. We'll be looking at how you can encourage these characteristics in this unit.

Now let's make one final point. We said that some groups are formal while others are informal.

SELF CHECK 4
Time guide
3 mins

We'll remind ourselves of the differences between formal and informal groups in a self check. Complete the following sentences with a suitable word or words.

1 Command groups, committee groups and task groups are _____ groups. They exist because of the job demands and the way the workplace is organised.

2 _____ groups arise because people get to know each other, make friends, share non work-related activities and communications.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words so you'll need to check out your responses carefully. 1. formal is the word I would use here as this describes groups which are deliberately set up by the organisation. 2 informal is the word I would use since informal relations can develop between people who spend time together.

Workteams, then, can be seen as formal groups in that they exist because of the demands of the job and organisation. On the other hand, because people spend time together, they're likely to get to know each other and may develop informal relationships. So, the workteam may operate as an informal group.

Football team members are given their positions by the team manager. But, they may become friends, go out together and discuss tactics for the next game outside work. It's the same with workteam members.

So now we know the kind of groups which exist at work and we're beginning to put together a picture of what it takes to create a workteam.

But clearly we all have in mind different groups of people working in different ways when we read about 'groups' and 'teams' in this unit.

How a group is made up and how it operates will be affected by a number of different factors about the workplace. So let's look at some of these factors now.

5 The effect of the workplace on groups

Now let's look at some of the things which affect the nature of a group at work and help to form particular features or characteristics which may or may not make it effective. At this stage we're just thinking about things about the particular workplace in which the group exists. Later on in the unit we'll look at forces which operate within the group itself.

5.1 The nature of the workplace

The working atmosphere in a group and the way things are done are affected by a number of features of the workplace as a whole.

ACTIVITY 11
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down three things which might affect the nature of a group in your workplace.

eg the people in the group

* _____

* _____

* _____

There are all sorts of possible answers to this and what you have thought of may well reflect your own experience at work.

A typical list could include:

* the people in the group

* the atmosphere in the workplace - whether people are used to and willing to work together

* the type of work done - whether it's heavy engineering or retail for example; whether it's simple, repetitive or varied

* the technology - whether it's mass-production assembly line or involves using less complicated machinery which one person can use as and when required

* the ways in which people are paid - whether pay is determined entirely by your own efforts or you are paid some kind of bonus which reflects what the team, or the whole firm, has achieved. Or whether you are paid for getting the job done, including working cooperatively with other people

* the need to adapt to changes in ways of working - new legislation can bring about changes in the way things are done. The Health and Safety at Work Act is an example.

* the way in which work is organised - can make it more or less easy for groups of all the kinds we've mentioned to function.

As a supervisor you may not be able to do anything about any of these but it's important to realise that they will have an effect on groups - on the 'raw material' from which you are trying to build a team.

It's worth trying to highlight a few important points which come out of that list. The type of work is likely to affect things like the size of the workgroup, technology and the sorts of skills people use. Let's look briefly at the size of groups.

Group size

ACTIVITY 12
Time guide
3 mins

Tick what you think is the appropriate response to the following questions.

a Do you think it's easier to get to know people

in a small group? (ie 4-10 people)	☐
in a large group?	☐

b Do you think it's easier to join in discussions

in a small group?	☐
in a large group?	☐

c Do you think you can contribute to decision making better

in a small group?	☐
in a large group?	☐

d Do you think it's easier to become involved in the work of

a small group?	☐
a larger group?	☐

e Do you think you would feel your contribution counted for more

in a small group?	☐
in a large group?	☐

Most people are likely to answer 'small group' to all these questions although, of course, there's nothing wrong if you choose not to. Our attitude is very much influenced by our own experience at work.

However, generally people find it easier to operate in small groups and to participate fully. So the smaller the workteam, the more likely we are to find each member fully involved in the team's effort.

The Type of Work

The type of work being done affects how people work and the nature of the groups which are formed. For example, it's been observed that where the work is of a 'one-off' nature and rates of pay have frequently to be negotiated, groups will tend to look after their own interests first and foremost and may deal quite severely with any newcomers who don't do the same as they do. If you'd like to know more about how the technology used affects things like behaviour and attitudes of individuals and groups then you might like to follow up this extension.

EXTENSION 2
page 97

5.2 The nature of groups

You've quite possibly found in your own experience that some groups, by their very nature, are more difficult to manage than others.

ACTIVITY 13
Time guide
4 mins

Spend a few minutes thinking about groups you have supervised or belonged to. Jot down three reasons why you think some would be easier to manage than others. What was it about the nature of the job or the relations between people, for instance, that made the difference?

* _____

* _____

* _____

What you've said will reflect your own experience but perhaps these reasons are among your answers.

* Some groups don't seem to take much interest in what they're doing.

* Some groups are hard to please and make a lot of demands for changes and improvements.

* Some groups take offence very quickly.

* Some groups suffer from friction between individuals in the group.

* Some groups have bad relations with whoever is supervising them.

Earlier we listed a number of things which can affect the nature of a group. One of these was the type of work. Let's look in a bit more detail at some of the features connected with the type of work.

ACTIVITY 14
Time guide
2 mins

Write down one or two examples of things connected with the type of work which could affect the nature of a group. I've entered one myself to get you started.

eg how work is organised

* _____

* _____

There are a number of suggestions you could have made. The type of work done will affect the technology, machines or tools used, the layout of the workplace and the size of the workgroup. In that some types of work, such as micro-electronics, may involve frequent changes in technology, it can even affect the type of management. Some managements are more flexible and adaptive to change than others. The type of work done also affects whether a workteam is needed at all.

Team work may not always be absolutely necessary if group members each do different jobs with different tools and equipment. However a supervisor would probably want to feel that they could be moulded into a team if necessary.

In some industries we may find little team spirit among people. For instance, in some factories the work is very routine and mechanical. Operating the machines may not take much skill. If each person does a different job with different tools and machinery and the work isn't that well paid we may find a lack of team spirit. So, technolgy can make teams less likely to develop. Building team spirit in this situation can take a lot of effort. However, it's not impossible if we can identify some of the things which can help make groups into teams.

EXTENSION 2
page 97

REFERENCE 2
page 98

Sayles has identified four different types of workgroups based on features like the ones we've just looked at. This reference is one of a number of possible ones we could have used. If you'd like to explore more theoretical approaches to features of workgroups you might like to look at this.

Here we'll keep our discussion on a straightforward practical level.

ACTIVITY 15
Time guide
3 mins

Let's consider the construction industry for a minute. People move round frequently from job to job or employer to employer so they're not likely to build up team spirit over a long period. All sorts of people on a building site are engaged in doing separate jobs, and some of them aren't that skilled or well paid.

Yet workteams like these are quite common.

* Plastering teams - with perhaps one person mixing plaster and two putting it up.

* Concreting teams - with perhaps one mixer and two layers.

* Brick laying teams - workteams made up of two mixers and carriers with two master brick layers are quite common.

Write down one or two suggestions as to what helps to make these groups into effective teams?

* _____

* _____

You may have identified various things. For example, each person depends on the efforts of the others and everyone can see that this is the case. There's an opportunity to take a pride in the work because the team can see what the result of their effort is. There's good and bad plastering, bricklaying and concreting. If there are several similar teams working there may be good natured rivalry as to whose brick wall, plaster wall or concrete drive is best. But most of all these things are possible because the groups are SMALL, so let's focus on size for a moment here.

As we saw plastering, bricklaying and concreting teams are only likely to comprise three or four people and, under these conditions, can operate very successfully.

Workteams tend to be small. If there are more than about a dozen team members, people can lose sight of how their work relates to that done by the others.

ACTIVITY 16
Time guide
3 mins

Try to think of another reason why large groups are less likely to develop team spirit.

* _____

Perhaps you suggested that friction between them is more likely, or that there's liable to be less chance they all get to know each other. It can also be true that if people don't see where their efforts fit in they can lose interest in what they're doing.

Now in our construction example we were looking at workteams which have the important features we identified earlier. The members are:

* task oriented

* dependent on each other's efforts

* dynamic.

But just because workgroups aren't workteams doesn't mean that they can't have team spirit.

In a factory we may have a workgroup where people do the same job, with the same type of machine, in the same workshop. Very often the nature of the job doesn't require much teamwork.

However, there is almost certainly a pool of knowledge and experience in the group and this can be the means of moulding such a group into a team. Some companies have introduced the idea of quality circles to involve such groups in working together to solve quality problems in their own work area.

EXTENSION 1
page 97

Another unit in this series, Quality Circles, gives an example of one of the ways in which this has been done.

ACTIVITY 17
Time guide
3 mins

Try to make a suggestion as to how we might help to create a feeling of team spirit in a situation like this.

* _____

_____

We've already mentioned a number of things. Perhaps you included some of these. For instance we could keep the group small, we could pay attention to how our machines are laid out, we could organise meetings or problem solving committees which give people a chance to work together. Quality circles, which we've already mentioned, are a special type of problem solving group.

Now, one of the things that can give supervisors problems is if team spirit develops in such a way that the interests of the team members are different from those of the organisation.

ACTIVITY 18
Time guide
3 mins

Suppose such a group is being monitored by a Work Study team who are developing a new incentive bonus scheme.

How might the group operate as a team in their own interests?

* _____

_____

Probably many of us have come up against this sort of situation at some time, although Work Study may not have been directly involved.

In this case the group may well work together to restrict output or get an over-favourable time standard put on individual jobs so that they will do very well out of the new incentive bonus scheme.

ACTIVITY 19
Time guide
1 min

In the situation we've just described, would you say the group is acting as a formal group or an informal group?

FORMAL/INFORMAL

I hope we can agree that in this situation they are acting as an informal group whose interests can be very much at odds with those of the organisation.

Such a group obviously poses problems for the supervisor which we'll come back to later.

Let's do a self check before moving on.

SELF CHECK 5
Time guide
5 mins

List three things which could affect the nature of a work group. I've entered one to get you started.

eg The type of work done by people in the group.

* _____

* _____

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. In the unit we listed a number of things: the people in the group, the type of work done, the technology, the way in which people are paid, the need to adapt to changes in ways of working and the ways in which work is organised. The size of the group can be a major influence on the development of team spirit, so can layout of the workplace insofar as it encourages people to get to know each other better.

Now let's look at how organisations try to influence the way people working for them behave and see what that does to the nature of groups.

5.3 How organisations exert influence on groups

How do organisations influence the way you behave?

They can do it in basically three ways:

by force or by threat
by payment
by involving people in their work

Let's look at each of these in turn and think about the kind of response each is likely to get.

Force or threat

We can think of quite a few non-business organisations which use this method, for example prisons, detention centres, psychiatric hospitals, where some people have to stay through the force of the law. In business, economic threats may be used, threats of redundancy for example.

ACTIVITY 20
Time guide
3 mins

Suppose you work for a firm which has several times used the threat of redundancy to get people to do more. How would you feel about the firm and the work it is trying to do?

You'd probably feel hostile towards management and I don't suppose you'd feel any commitment to the firm or what it was trying to do.

It's clearly very difficult to build up a workteam in any situation where threats of any kind are being used.

Payment

Other organisations use their wage payment systems as a means of influencing people. For example, in a production environment, operators may be given bonus payments for a high level of output.

In selling, the method of payment can also be used as a means of trying to get sales staff to sell more. Commission is the word normally used for the bonus payments given to sales staff. Some organisations link payment quite strongly to results.

ACTIVITY 21
Time guide
3 mins

Spend a few minutes thinking about this way of trying to influence people at work. How do you think this might influence work groups?

*

You may well feel that, since we all work for money to some extent, work groups might put in more effort in order to earn more money. In some cases this will be so.

Then again, people's attitude to pay varies. Some groups may favour a regular, predictable income which they know is sufficient to meet their commitments; others may prefer the possibility of very high earnings some weeks and accept the risk of low earnings at other times.

Either way people are likely to base their actions on what they can get out of them.

What does this mean for a supervisor trying to build up a workteam?

ACTIVITY 22
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down what you think would be the biggest problem a supervisor would have building a workteam where payment is the means used to influence people's behaviour.

*

I would have said the biggest problem is the risk that the way the workteam operates may not be in the best interests of the firm. There are plenty of examples of groups trying to exercise some control over their earnings by, for example, restricting output as a group, so that their earnings level is fairly stable. This clearly doesn't fit in with what the firm is aiming to achieve and, as a supervisor, can put you in a very difficult position.

Involvement in the job

Lastly, organisations may rely on the commitment individuals have to their work, their workmates or their workplace. In other words, they rely on individuals being responsible for their own work and the efforts of their group. This is possible where people are involved in the work itself.

So we've looked at three ways organisations seek to influence behaviour:

* threats
* payment
* involvement in the job

ACTIVITY 23
Time guide
2 mins

Which influence is most likely to produce workteams whose interests are most similar to the interests of the organisation as a whole?

* _____

_____

I hope we can agree that involving workteams in the job and encouraging their commitment to the workplace and to each other is most likely to produce workteams whose interests are similar to those of the organisation.

ACTIVITY 24
Time guide
4 mins

Suppose you are a member of a workteam whose members you get on with and whose work you enjoy and feel committed to. You feel a responsible and highly regarded member of the team. Jot down three things which you would find particularly satisfying working in this situation.

* _____
* _____
* _____

_____

Well, you could have written quite a long list. Perhaps you felt we were talking about everybody's ideal work situation. Here are some features which I would note.

* the friendship, support, 'togetherness' of the workteam

* the sense of personal identity which you would have from being part of the team

* the increased feeling of self-respect because you're a member of a team doing a worthwhile job

* the feeling that you're not acting on your own as far as work is concerned

* being with people with similar ideas and attitudes to you

That list is by no means complete.

The interesting thing about it is that seeking these things is the basic reason which draws us together in groups anyway.

Many jobs are too complex to do on our own anyway so we have to work in groups but, apart from that, we often need the company and support of other people to perform well and a workteam which is functioning well is, for many of us, the unit which suits us and the interests of the workplace best.

EXTENSION 3
page 97

You might now like to take up our third extension which is a video in the BBC Supervisor series. It shows us how supervisors leading different types of group have approached some of the problems of getting team effort.

SELF CHECK 6
Time guide
5 mins

Complete the following statements with a suitable word or words.

(a) Organisations seek to influence the behaviour of people working for them by _____, _____ and _____.

(b) It's easiest to build a workteam if the organisation already _____ people in their work.

(c) Involvement in your job means that you feel a sense of commitment to _____ and _____.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. (a) Organisations seek to influence behaviour by threats, payment and involvement in the job. (b) It's involvement in the job which makes it easiest for the supervisor to build a workteam. (c) Involvement in the job means that you feel a sense of commitment to your job, or you may have said to the organisation, and to your workteam. Any of these would have been acceptable answers.

We've talked about groups in general and about workteams in particular, but let's not lose sight of the fact that workteams are composed of individuals. We all have different backgrounds, personalities and outside influences on how we approach work and life in general. The personalities of the people who make up a group will also affect its nature, so we'll look in more depth at this in Part B of our unit.

6 Summary

Group - a number of people with shared interests or ties

Team - a small group of people who work together to achieve the same thing

Formal groups - arise as a result of the way the firm is organised

Informal groups - arise when people come across each other frequently and identify a common interest

Formal groups you may find at work

- command groups
- committees
- project or task groups

The nature of groups at work are influenced by

- the type of work done
- the technology used
- how the organisation influences people

Organisations try to influence people's behaviour by

- threats
- payment
- involvement in the job

PART B INDIVIDUALS IN GROUPS

1 Introduction

So far we've looked at various types of groups and the things which affect their nature and whether or not they are likely to operate as teams. But workteams are people. Every member will make a contribution to the team. This affects team effort and other team members, and each member is, in turn, affected by the rest of the team. So let's look at the impact of individuals on workteams.

2 The individual

We can have certain unique qualities which are as evident at work as anywhere.

ACTIVITY 25
Time guide
5 mins

Take a few minutes to think about where these individual qualities come from. What makes us inclined to behave in one way or another? Write down three suggestions.

eg upbringing

parents

* _____

* _____

* _____

You could have mentioned all sorts of things. Here are some which occur to me:

* upbringing
* parents
* friends
* religious or political beliefs
* personality, nature or disposition (e.g. cheerful, quick-tempered etc)
* whatever makes us 'tick'
* things which have happened to us in the past.

What makes us behave in the way we do is obviously quite a complex package.

Let's try to examine some elements of it in more detail.

3 Personality

If you think about your workteam, your family or a group of your friends, you would probably be able to say straightaway that they all have different personalities - some are cheerful and outgoing, some moody and quiet; some quick-tempered, others even-tempered, and so on.

Among our friends and family we accept these differences of personality and treat each person, as far as we can, in accordance with his personality. Our friends, certainly, become our friends because of their particular personalities fitting in well with our own.

ACTIVITY 26
Time Guide
2 mins

Jot down one example from your own experience of how you might treat a friend or member of your family in a certain way in accordance with their personality.

eg taking care not to upset a timid child unnecessarily.

* _____

Clearly, the special considerations we show of people's personalities are very varied and I can't even guess at all your answers. Here are a few examples though

* reassuring somebody who is inclined to worry

* making sure you include one outgoing cheerful person in a group of quiet people at a party

* making a point of talking to somebody who is quiet and shy.

Perhaps you can see from these examples and from your own that what we are doing each time is balancing up a characteristic of somebody's personality with somebody else's or our own - talking to a quiet person, giving an anxious person reassurance, livening up a quiet group with somebody talkative and sociable.

We have to do something similar in a workteam. Everybody brings their own personality to the team, all of them different. We have to

* accept their personalities as they are

accept that workteam members can't suddenly all become the same just because they are in the team, anymore than you can think or act in an identical way to any of them.

* 'balance up' personalities in the team

  draw out the shy members, make sure that the talkative, noisy members don't overwhelm the rest, make sure that somebody who tends to look on the black side and find difficulties is carried along by somebody more cheerful and forward looking.

* make the most of the personalities you've got

  don't forget that you have a distinct personality too with your own way of looking at things. One person's approach or attitude isn't necessarily the only one or even the best. The pessimist may, in fact, identify some important considerations which a more optimistic, extrovert person might miss in their enthusiasm. The noisy, cheerful optimist, on the other hand, may be just what you need to get the job done, with everybody's help, today.

* treat people in accordance with their personalities

  as far as possible, treat people as individuals. This involves taking the time to get to know them and understanding how they like to be treated. (Obviously, you've got a job to do and your first responsibility is to make sure the workteam is doing what it's paid for. The secret is to get them to want to do what you know needs to be done - more of that later.)

Once you make the effort to get to know somebody you soon realise that what they are colours the whole way they see things and determines whatever it is that drives them to make an effort in any particular direction.

The way we see things is called PERCEPTION.

What drives us is called MOTIVATION.

Let's look at each of them briefly now.

4 Perception

Perception is how we see and make sense of everything that is going on around us.

We are continually bombarded with information through our senses - sight, hearing, touch, smell - and we sift, select and interpret that information in the light of what we already know and the expectations we've built up.

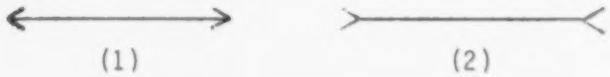
This is the only reality we know and we have no way of perceiving what's happening except this - we can't get outside our own skin and our own brain. Everybody's perception of the world is necessarily individual and their own. Although, obviously, we share a lot of common knowledge and agreement about reality, you can never be sure that everybody else sees an object or a situation at work in the same way as you do. Nor can you be sure that your perception is 'real' and somebody else's is not.

To illustrate how our perception can sometimes mislead us let's look at this example.

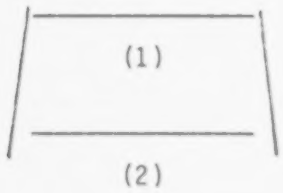
ACTIVITY 27
Time guide
2 mins

Look at these lines carefully then answer the questions by putting a tick beside the answer which seems most correct.

A



B



In A line 1 is:

a) shorter than line 2

b) longer than line 2

c) the same size as line 2

In B line 1 is:

a) shorter than line 2

b) longer than line 2

c) the same size as line 2

Perhaps you've come across these examples before. If you have then you would have ticked (c) in both cases because the lines are the same size. If you are in doubt about this, try measuring them with a ruler. All four lines are exactly the same length. The problem is that we've drawn them in such a way that in A line 2 appears longer to most people. In B line 2 appears shorter to most people.

Probably as soon as you are told that the lines are the same length or you measure them yourself, you perceive them differently and, because you've received some new information in the light of which you interpret what you see, you 'see' the lines differently.

In this example we're just dealing with the sense of sight - how much more scope there is for misunderstanding or wrongly interpreting complex situations at work when all your senses and a great deal of experiences and a great number of expectations are involved.

We said just now that we sift, select and interpret the information our senses give us. This means that we tend just to focus on certain pieces of information and to dismiss others. If what we see doesn't quite fit with what we expect, there's a tendency to make it fit; to adapt or distort the information we've received so that it matches our previous experiences or our expectations.

Perhaps you can see how easy it is for people to get very fixed ideas about things which happen at work. They will perceive them in the light of their experience and expectations and may simply not take in information which is as clear as daylight to somebody else.

So what do we do about people's differing perceptions?

ACTIVITY 28
Time guide
3 mins

Suppose your workteam is having to change its shift rota. Some members of your workteam see this as the first step in a management plot to reduce manning levels and create redundancies. You know that this isn't the case. They perceive the problems differently from you.

Jot down two things you could do to change their perception of the situation.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

You might try any of the following:

* keep them well-informed

  Any information which you have, pass it on. It's only in the light of increased information that we are able to change our perceptions of anything.

* talk through the situation with them

  Everybody sees everything in a certain way. Because they don't see things the same way as you they are not necessarily wrong. Their perception of the situation needs to be talked through and shared before it can be changed.

* use the perception of the rest of the workteam

  We find it reassuring when other people seem to see things the same way we do. If the rest of the workteam interpret the situation the same way as you, use them to try to change the perception of the others.

Now let's have a look at motivation.

5 Motivation

This whole area is concerned with what induces people to behave in certain ways. What is it that drives a person to do something? What induces people in some jobs to work overtime even when they know they won't be paid for it? How can a team leader persuade or motivate workteam members to participate as fully as they are able in workteam activities? It is easier to ask questions about motivation than it is to give precise answers to them. The things which motivate people in a workteam are likely to be as varied and different as the individual workteam members. People differ widely in the things that give them satisfaction at work, and will choose to put differing amounts of energy into the things they do.

ACTIVITY 29
Time guide
3 mins

Try to think of two reasons for going to work. List them in the space below.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

A lot of people would include something meaning "for the money" in their list. But, there are a lot of other reasons for working and many reasons for working hard or trying to be as effective as possible. Perhaps your list included some of the following:

* for the social contacts at work

* it's good to feel you're achieving something

* being a supervisor helps give you a sense of identity - the question "What do you work as?" is often one of the first we ask when we meet people for the first time.

Whatever you wrote may be the things which seem most relevant in motivating you. However we can't assume that the same things motivate everyone. One person may be highly motivated to work overtime for the extra money. Another might prefer to take time off.

Our psychological make-up influences the things which motivate us to behave in certain ways. We can't assume that INDIVIDUALS in a workteam are primarily motivated to achieve the things which the WORKTEAM is trying to achieve. An individual may be motivated as a workteam member by the things like a desire for social approval from other group members - in other words, the need to gain their respect. It's not our intention here to deal with the various theories of what might motivate workteam members. If you'd like to explore this problem further, them you might like to take up our fourth extension, to another unit in this series, which gives a useful summary of some of the main theories of motivation, and which goes into some of the main theories in more depth.

EXTENSION 4
page 97

What we do need to understand though is that

MOTIVES MAY NOT BE AS STRAIGHTFORWARD AS THEY SEEM.

Sometimes people may be motivated by the factors which we've just mentioned and, if they think about it, will realise that this is so. Sometimes they may be motivated by complex psychological needs of their own which are nothing to do with what is happening at work. These are difficult to identify in somebody else and, sometimes, something which you are not even aware of in yourself.

What it can mean is that, for complex psychological reasons, people may try to achieve, by being workteam members, things which have nothing to do with the activities of the group.

Here are two examples to show you what I mean.

* An individual who always seems to be looking for reassurance, advice or assistance, only to accuse those who give it of interfering with their work, or meddling unnecessarily.

* Someone who often seems to get into situations at work which require others to resolve the difficulties created.

If you have such a person in your workteam you may recognise what he's doing but why is sometimes more difficult to work out.

ACTIVITY 30
Time guide
3 mins

Look at the first example and jot down one reason why somebody might behave in this way.

* _____

Your guess is likely to be as good as mine. Perhaps our workteam member is

* lacking in confidence and trying to hide the fact by blaming the other person for meddling.

* trying to get sympathy from the other members of the group

REFERENCE 3 page 98

Eric Berne, in this reference, suggests that people often try to get as much as they can out of their contacts with other people. As he puts it "The goal of each member of the aggregation (or group) is to obtain as many satisfactions as possible from . . . transactions with other members".

Berne suggests that if we look beneath the surface of the interactions between people we often find them playing 'games' with each other.

That means that, consciously or not, we all try to satisfy psychological needs of our own when we mix with other people in groups. Sometimes this fits in with what the group is trying to achieve and with the needs and expectations of the other group members. But this isn't always the case. Sometimes one or more group members may manipulate other people into relationships with themselves in a way which the rest of the group don't want and which doesn't help to achieve what the workteam is trying to do - for example, somebody who frequently bursts into floods of tears and looks frail and helpless whenever the going gets tough.

When they do things like this, these people force others in the group to play a certain part in the play they seem to be devising or to take on a certain role. This is an idea which Berne explores in depth.

Two of the likely roles he identified are:

persecutor

rescuer.

You can see that neither of them is desirable in a workteam where you are supposed to support each other, cooperate and work together.

ACTIVITY 31
Time guide
4 mins

You remember just now I mentioned two examples of behaviour which suggest that somebody is motivated by complex psychological needs of their own which may clash with what the group is trying to achieve. These were:

* an individual who seems to be always looking for reassurance, advice or assistance, only to accuse those who give it of interfering with their work or meddling unnecessarily

* _____

* someone who often seems to get into situations at work which require others to resolve the difficulties created

* _____

Jot down which role - persecutor or rescuer - each of these types of behaviour would force on somebody else in the group.

_____

I hope we can agree that the first type of behaviour forces somebody into the role of persecutor. The second type of behaviour forces somebody into the role of rescuer.

Such behaviour can seriously damage the effectiveness of workteams and, as a team leader, you need to be on the look out for behaviour which suggests that some people are playing 'games' with other team members.

SELF CHECK 7
Time guide
3 mins

Complete the following statements with a suitable word or words.

a) In trying to satisfy personal psychological needs people may indulge in a type of behaviour which we can call _____ playing.

b) The type of behaviour we've identified in the last statement often means that other members of the group are manipulated into taking _____ which are not in keeping with the things the workteam is trying to achieve. This can impair workteam performance.

_____

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. a) People who bring hidden psychological needs of their own into groups may indulge in game playing. So, the word I would have used here would be game. b) The word I would use here would be role. In the context of our discussion about game playing, this means the part a person plays in his relations with another team member.

6 Social Influences

So far we have dealt with personality, perception and motivation. At the beginning of this part, though, we agreed that the particular way each of us behaves is influenced also by things like upbringing, background, beliefs and so on.

We can call these social influences.

ACTIVITY 32
Time guide
2 mins

Jot down two social influences on our own behaviour.

* _____

* _____

The list could be very long but perhaps you have included these:

* your background (school, military or work experience, church, etc)

* your family

* your circle of friends

* reference groups.

SELF CHECK 8
Time guide
1 min

We talked about reference groups in PART A.

Complete the following statement with a suitable word.

A reference group is a group with which we identify or _____ ourselves.

In Part A we said that people identified or compared themselves with reference groups.

These reference groups which people identify with reflect their values, attitudes and beliefs.

Our values, attitudes and beliefs influence the way we behave in every aspect of our lives.

ACTIVITY 33
Time guide
3 mins

Spend a couple of minutes thinking about the things you value most and jot a few of them down.

* _____

* _____

* _____

Obviously this is very personal and there's no question of being right or wrong. Perhaps your list included:

* the happiness of your family

* belonging to a certain group

* the education of your children

* fulfilment in your work or some other interest.

We are all influenced by the same sorts of things - family background for example - but we don't all respond to that influence in the same way.

For instance, somebody brought up with a strongly religious background may himself have strong religious beliefs or be strongly opposed to them, tolerant or intolerant of other people's beliefs. Our beliefs and values affect our attitudes towards people and situations and are reflected in the way we behave.

So what are the implications of this for the behaviour of the workteam?

ACTIVITY 34
Time guide
5 mins

Think for a few minutes about particular values or beliefs which you or people you work with have and which you know influence your or their behaviour at work.

For example, a racist attitude can make working relations difficult in a workteam of mixed racial background. Jot down two other examples where behaviour is influenced favourably or unfavourably.

* _____

* _____

The things you wrote probably reflect your personal experiences. Here are some possible examples but, of course, we could think of many more.

* Strong political beliefs may make it difficult to get along with other people at work who hold opposite beliefs as strongly.

* Most religions carry implications for the ways in which people relate to others. A devout Christian would probably not be willing totally to disregard other people in an effort to get a promotion.

* Someone who strongly values private schools might be very highly motivated to work overtime to pay school fees.

* If we value the time we're able to spend with our husbands, wives and children, this may influence the way we respond to requests to work overtime.

Attitudes, values and beliefs tend to be very slow to change. Nevertheless, for a workteam to be effective, some changes, even minor ones, may be necessary because it's important for members to have some sense of identity as a team. In order to do that they need to be able to identify to some extent with the other members and to have a positive attitude towards them, towards what they are trying to do and towards what they have already achieved as a team.

Perhaps now we can identify some of the individual qualities which might help or hinder somebody being an effective workteam member.

ACTIVITY 35
Time guide
3 mins

Look at this list of qualities and tick those which you feel would make an effective workteam member.

a) values individual achievement

b) an outgoing, cheerful disposition

c) strongly political and intolerant of people with different political beliefs

d) likes people, sociable

e) quiet, shy

f) has firm views about most things, including work and is reluctant to change his mind

g) adaptable to most changes in circumstances.

I would have ticked (b), (d), (e) and (g). Someone who values individual achievement highly may find it difficult to identify with group achievements. An intolerant attitude, whether it's about politics or changing circumstances at work, may find it difficult to build good working relationships in a workteam. You notice I included (e). Not everybody needs to be a sociable extrovert. With careful handling, a quiet, shy person can make a vary valuable contribution and operating within a small, supportive team may be just the opportunity needed to make himself heard.

So these are some of the qualities we would hope to find in members of a team but, as we'll see, the team still needs to pass through several stages before it becomes really effective. These will include:

* ironing out problems arising from individual differences

or, where that is impossible,

* pushing them into the background in the interests of an effective working relationship.

SELF CHECK 9
Time guide
3 mins

Complete the following sentences with a suitable word or words.

a) If a group demands a pay rise to give them the same rates of pay as another group then their actions are being influenced by identification with a _____ group.

b) Our workteam can be a _____ social influence on our ways of acting. We are in face-to-face contact with its members.

c) Our values and beliefs are things which _____ social influences help to shape throughout our lives. Direct contacts with others may modify them or help to change them.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. a) reference group. We said in the unit that reference groups are groups which people identify with. b) direct. Direct social influences are those arising out of face-to-face contacts. c) indirect. We noted that values and beliefs are influenced by a number of influences not all of which arise out of face-to-face contacts.

In this part of the unit we have looked at the individuals in the workteam and stressed the importance for the supervisor to recognise and respond to those individuals.

But individuals are really the raw material from which the team is made. People are changed by being in groups and it's up to the supervisor to make sure that those changes are in the interests of the team and of the workplace.

7 Summary

Our behaviour at work is influenced by:

* PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS - personality

  motivation

  perception.

* SOCIAL FACTORS - for example

  family
  friends
  workmates

  social background
  school
  reference groups

Social factors affect - VALUES

ATTITUDES

BELIEFS

which in turn affect behaviour.

PART C INFLUENCES IN GROUPS

1 Introduction

In the last part of our unit we looked at the individual in the workteam and considered some of the things which make people different. These differences between people mean that people can make their own individual contributions to the workteam, but at the same time we also need to recognise that the workteam itself is an influence on individual behaviour. Workteam members develop shared patterns of behaviour because they are part of the group. So, let's look at how these shared ways of behaving develop.

2 Norms

Let's think about our own places of work. People expect certain things of us and we expect certain things of other people.

ACTIVITY 36
Time guide
3 mins

You'll be expected to behave in certain ways. Try to think of an example of something that is expected of you. I've entered an example myself to get you started.

eg You may be expected to dress formally and not go to work in an old pair of jeans and a sweater.

* _____

The things that other people expect of us will depend on our jobs and where we work, but typical responses may have included some of the following things:

* People expect us to arrive at work at 8.30 am.
* Our workteam members expect us to use a particular locker for our coats.
* If we work in an office we may be expected to sit at a particular desk.
* We may be expected to call other workteam members by their first names.

Some of the things that are expected of you may be part of your terms of employment, for example arriving at work by 8.30 am. Others may simply have arisen out of habit or convenience or whatever. The expected ways of behaving which workteam members have of each other are called group norms. This means that if it's a group norm to call people by their first names we'd not normally expect people in the group to call each other Mr Smith or Mrs Jones. Group norms are the expected ways of behaving in the group.

Groups develop norms about a wide variety of things.

ACTIVITY 37
Time guide
3 mins

Try to think of two examples of group norms in your workplace. You could try thinking about how the workteam treat each other or view other sections or how the work, time and equipment is allocated at work. Or - of course - you may have other good ideas of your own.

* _____

* _____

We are likely to have thought of a number of different possibilities between us as group norms develop over a whole range of behaviour. Here are just some examples:

* the actual work that people do - perhaps it's become accepted that certain people in the workteam do certain tasks. There's no particular reason for it, or the reason has been forgotten - it's just the way things are done

* the way that people talk to each other - there may be norms about the degree of teasing or abuse which is accepted

* the attitude of the workteam towards other groups - the norm may be friendly rivalry, total scorn, general cooperation, indifference or whatever

* the way people dress - perhaps the extent to which they willingly wear safety shoes or wear overalls buttoned all the way up

* the way people spend their lunch hour. They may all just disappear their own ways or go to the canteen together or to the pub.

If group members follow the group norms then this probably means that most of them will have changed their behaviour to some extent in order to fit in.

You probably found that group norms are fairly easy to spot if there is something odd about them - if they stand out in some way from what happens in the rest of the workplace.

It's rather harder to pin down norms which concern people's attitudes to work.

Any group is likely to have some norms which affect

* how much work workteam members do

* how willing they are to change their way of working

* how much thought they will give to finding new ways of doing things.

These norms may apply to a whole organisation or just to one group within it. Every workteam will have norms of its own and these norms may or may not be in the best interests of the organisation as a whole. For instance, it may be the norm to keep output to a certain level even though it would be quite possible to do more.

Once norms have become established in a workteam, there is a good deal of pressure on individual members to conform to them.

ACTIVITY 38
Time guide
3 mins

Spend a minute or two thinking about why we conform to group norms. Write down two suggestions here.

eg we may want to be accepted by other group members.

* _____

* _____

We conform to group norms for a number of reasons. The need to be accepted as a group member is an important one. Other typical reasons might include

* a desire to avoid the displeasure of other group members

* a belief that these norms reflect our own views

* our belief in the aims of the group.

You may have thought of others.

There are a number of subtle ways in which we show approval or disapproval or encourage or discourage the behaviour of other workteam members. If someone breaks an important norm, or even persists in not conforming to a less important one, the other workteam members may resort to more direct means of putting pressure on that person to behave in the accepted ways.

We can probably all recall at least one occasion where a new person has joined our workteam. Perhaps this person was full of enthusiasm, and not knowing how things were done wanted to change them. It doesn't normally take long for the group to lick a new member into shape by subtle or not so subtle means. At the start they may be greeted coldly, people may not seem so friendly, or may drop subtle hints. But if this doesn't work a more direct approach is likely to be used.

ACTIVITY 39
Time guide
3 mins

Suppose somebody still breaks an important norm and the subtle approach hasn't done anything to change his behaviour.

Suggest two more direct ways that the group might try to make him change.

* _____

* _____

Perhaps your suggestions are among these.

* Make jokes at the expense of the norm breaker.

* Use criticism and ridicule.

* Ignore the person in so far as possible. In extreme cases this has meant sending people to Coventry, that is not speaking to them at all. There have been several examples of this happening to people who have continued to work when their work mates have been on strike.

* In extreme cases, violence has been used, for example, where somebody is breaking an apparently solid strike or, conversely, taking strike action when the accepted behaviour is to continue working.

However, to balance this, we should remember that group members are more likely to conform if they find the group attractive and they want to be part of it. Conforming to group norms isn't something which is just achieved by pressure from the rest of the group.

Similarly, the more attractive a group is to most of its members, the more firmly they will deal with anybody who does not conform - because they feel that, as a group, they have a lot at stake.

The means a group may use to bring pressure on a group member which we looked at in the lact activity may strike you as a little severe. We mentioned them particularly because they are easy to recognise.

However, it's equally likely that somebody who doesn't conform will simply be left alone to get on with things in his own way but he won't enjoy the satisfaction of group membership, such as support, shared problems, shared jokes and shared sense of achievement.

3 Group roles

We've seen so far that everybody makes their own individual contribution to the workteam and that, just because they are in the team, their behaviour is modified in some way so that they abide by group norms.

Since, however, they are all different, they all tend to take on different roles in the team. Indeed, we'll see that a healthy, well-balanced workteam depends upon people assuming different roles.

ACTIVITY 40
Time guide
3 mins

If you think about your workteam, you can probably identify some different roles which people take on. For instance, one person may be the peace-maker who smooths things over, another may make everybody laugh when things get tense, somebody else may be the 'human dynamo' needed to get things done.

Jot down three examples of roles which individual people in your workplace take on. (Don't forget to think about yourself in this.)

* _____
* _____
* _____

There are all sorts of roles you could have thought of. I'll just mention two in addition to those I gave you before.

* Somebody seems to be 'the ideas man' - always to be relied on to think of new and different ways of doing something

* Somebody else is the one people take their troubles to. If anybody in the workteam is struggling, this is the person who recognises it and helps them out - perhaps just with a kind word.

I hope you can see that the first of those roles relates to WORK - getting the task in hand done. The second relates to how people get on in the team - how they feel and how well they work with each other. We can call this a SOCIAL ROLE.

Let's briefly look at each of them in turn.

3.1 Work-related roles

In looking at these roles we're not concerned with individual job descriptions. The sort of work each workteam member does will vary with the type of workteam and the industry but we can identify certain work-related roles which are likely to make team working easier in any working environment.

ACTIVITY 41
Time guide
4 mins

Suppose you are a member of a sales workteam. You and the rest of the team cover a wide geographical area selling a completely new range of products. There's a lot to learn about the products, the customers' response to them. You have weekly meetings to:

* pool ideas and experience
* develop a new selling technique
* collect information which you have to send back as a team to head office.

That list should give you a clue to some of the work-related roles which you would need to have fulfilled in that particular workteam.

Jot down two examples

* _____
* _____

---

* You have to pool ideas and experience, so I would say you need somebody to be CO-ORDINATOR - somebody who will help people to pool their thinking and swap ideas around and pull together the efforts of the team
* You have to develop new selling techniques so you need at least one ideas person - a CONTRIBUTOR of suggestions for improvement or change
* You have to send information back to head office as a team so you need an INFORMATION GATHERER. Perhaps somebody else is needed to chase up people for their contribution so you may need a CHASER too.

Those aren't necessarily all the roles you need. The important thing is that, as a supervisor, you look at your workteam's job, decide what are the important elements and, as far as possible, use the talents and personalities of the people you've got to cover the roles you need.

Now let's look at the social roles which are likely to develop.

3.2 Social roles

Social roles help team members communicate effectively with each other and function as a social group.

I mentioned three just now - the MEDIATOR who smooths things over

- the TENSION RELIEVER who can make everybody laugh when things get tense

- the GROUP SUPPORTER who provides support and friendship to other members of the team when necessary

---

ACTIVITY 42
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down two more examples of social roles which you can recognise in your own workplace.

* _____

* _____

Once again, it's unlikely that we've all thought of the same things so here are just a couple which I can think of.

SPOKESMAN — somebody can usually find words for how the team is feeling and may get pushed to the front and relied on to speak for the rest

MIXER — somebody has a knack of getting on with everybody and making sure that everyone has their say - perhaps drawing out shy members and holding back more talkative ones during a discussion

I don't want to suggest that each individual in a workteam assumes one particular role. People may share a role (you need several contributors, for example, to get any change brought about) and one person may have more than one role.

However, when things go wrong in workteam relations, it is often because nobody has taken on an important social role, such as mediator, for example.

As a supervisor, you need to be aware of this need for a balance of roles and, failing anything else, take on the missing role yourself if you can.

Perhaps when you were thinking about roles which you could identify in your own workplace, you tended to think about 'trouble-makers', 'wreckers' and so on and felt that all the roles I have commented on so far actually help to get the job done. What about those which prevent the job being done?

We'll look at those now.

3.3 Game-playing roles

Remember what we said earlier about people's possible motivation? People may use being in a workteam for their own psychological purposes which are nothing to do with what the team is trying to achieve and, in so doing, may manipulate other people into roles they don't want and which can damage the team effort.

You may recall that previously we looked at the example of somebody who manipulates others into the role of 'rescuer' by continually seeking sympathy and behaving in a way which gives an impression of insecurity or confusion.

We could say that such a person is taking on the role of help-seeker.

ACTIVITY 43
Time guide
4 mins

Here are some snatches of conversation from a workteam meeting. See if you can identify the game-playing role which is being played in each.

Bill: I've never heard such rubbish. If you think that will work you must be more daft than I thought.	How would you describe the role Bill has taken on?
Gillian: Well, perhaps we could start with the Eastern Area. We haven't really considered that.	
Bill: No, I don't agree with that either. Look, don't you know the first thing about . . .	

Susan: Well, if that's agreed, I think we should switch to A range as soon as possible - within three weeks say.

Karen: I'm not convinced. I don't think we've given X range a fair chance.

Susan: I think we have. We talked about it for a long time last week and we all agreed that, although they had tried, X range wasn't really what we wanted.

Karen: Well I don't care about what we said last week. I don't think we've given X range a fair chance and I don't want to try A range until we have.

How would you describe the role Karen has taken on?

Stuart: John?

John: Oh, sorry I wasn't listening. I was just looking at the Christmas Lunch menu. Do you you think they've got shares in a turkey farm or something?

Stuart: What do you think we should do about the McIntyre order, John? Can you meet the deadline?

John: Me? I expect so. Not if I sit in hen-party meetings all day though. You carry on chatting. I'm off.

How would you describe the role John is taking on?

The labels we might give to these game-playing roles might vary but the roles themselves are quite common. Here is how I would describe them.

* BILL Attacker	Some people are aggressive in groups. They may do things like continually criticise others, usually disagree with suggestions or opinions made by others.
* KAREN Team Blocker	Someone who holds up, slows down or brings progress to a stop. A team blocker may do things like keep bringing up problems that have already been solved, frequently behave negatively towards suggestions, behave stubbornly and resist most changes.
* JOHN Outsider	Someone who stresses the lack of involvement in the group by doing things like raising issues which aren't important, showing little interest in what's happening in the group and generally behaving in ways which seem designed to make group activities appear unimportant or trivial.

Game-playing roles are usually disruptive and harmful to the workteam's performance.

Being aware of them means that you can, perhaps, spot them developing at an early stage before things go seriously wrong and encourage the person concerned into a more appropriate work-related role.

However, since this sort of behaviour springs from a complex psychological need you must always be prepared for it to re-surface and to deal with it again.

SELF CHECK 10
Time guide
5 mins

Complete the following statements with a suitable word or group of words.

(a) _____ roles are those which make communications and interactions between workteam members easier.

(b) _____ roles are those which make it easier for work groups to function as workteams.

(c) _____ _____ roles are those which are not appropriate to workteam activities. They are taken by people trying to achieve hidden psychological needs of their own through their relations with other workteam members.

The answers to this self check are here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. a) Social roles are those which make communications and interactions between workteam members easier. b) Work-related roles are those which make it easier for workgroups to function as workteams in the tasks they do. c) Game playing roles are those which are inappropriate to workteam activities.

So, we've said that workteam members can take on certain roles in the group.

SELF CHECK 11
Time guide
3 mins

In our unit we identified two types of helpful group role and one type of unhelpful group role.

(1) List the two types of helpful group role below.

* _____

* _____

(2) List the unhelpful group role below.

* _____

The answers to this self check are here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. The two helpful types of group role we identified were task or work-related roles and social roles. The unhelpful type of role was a game playing role.

We tend to find that when the people who fill task roles are strong personalities, the more likely it is that other group members will take on social supportive roles. These supportive roles help strong personalities exercise power in the group to get the tasks done. In many groups we could identify a 'task leader' who has the power to get the work of the workteam done. We can also identify social leaders in many groups who help the group to function as a social group. Let's look now at how workteam roles and norms of behaviour are influenced by the workteam itself.

4 Power and influence

ACTIVITY 44
Time guide
3 mins

You work as a supervisor in a plant making kitchen laminates. Your leading operator is friendly, warm and supportive of the operators on your section. Let's assume you also have an experienced operator who has a forceful personality. Which of the two would you suggest would fill the role of task leader and why? Write your suggestion here.

* _____

You may have said your leading operator because this person has officially or formally been given the job. On the other hand, you may have said that the leading operator is filling a social supportive role. That is it could be that this person has taken on the role of social leader. If this is the case it might be that the operator emerges with the power to be the real influence in the tasks of the group. In other words, the operator could be the informal task leader.

So, groups have the power to influence things like who is their real leader.

You may feel that it is an advantage for groups to be able to influence things like this.

ACTIVITY 45
Time guide
3 mins

Try to think of a possible advantage in the workteam influencing the real task leader so that the most powerful person in the group actually does the job. Write your suggesion here.

* _____

_____

Perhaps you felt that because the task leader will be the person with most power and influence, overall workteam results would be better. You may have suggested that output would benefit, peole may work faster or better. Alternatively you may have suggested that unhelpful game playing roles which hurt workteam performance may be modified. Well, this could all be the case if the group norms are in line with the aims of the organisation, but what if they are not?

ACTIVITY 46
Time guide
3 mins

Try to think of a way in which group norms may not be in tune with the aims of the workplace. Write your suggestion in the space below.

* _____

_____

We've already seen that workteams may have output norms which fall below those of which they are able. It may be a norm for workteams to be suspicious of management, or uncooperative with work study specialists.

In these examples there is an apparent conflict between task objectives and the interests of workteam members. Groups also have the power to induce conformity to ways of behaving which are not of benefit to the organisation. It's also the case that groups will sometimes tolerate the more passive unhelpful game playing roles for some time, instead of using group influence to modify them. For example, if a workteam member suffers a tragedy, such as the loss of a spouse or perhaps some major illness of another close relative, that person may distract the workteam members with the 'sympathy-seeker' role for some time.

So, we should recognise the fact that while groups are powerful and can influence things like who actually leads, or how members behave, this power and influence may not always work in our favour.

SELF CHECK 12 Decide whether each of the following statements is TRUE or FALSE.

Time guide
5 mins

(a) Workteams develop norms only about behaviour related to the job.

TRUE/FALSE

(b) Everybody conforms to group norms.

TRUE/FALSE

(c) Group roles are either work-related or social.

TRUE/FALSE

(d) Game playing roles are played by people who keep the workteams cheerful.

TRUE/FALSE

(e) All roles taken on by members of the workteam contribute to workteam performance.

TRUE/FALSE

The answers to this self check are here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. a) Workteams, or indeed any groups, develop norms which affect a wide range of things. As well as norms concerning the work they do and their attitude towards it, the workteam may develop norms concerning their social relationships, how they dress, how they spend the lunch hour and so on. b) This isn't strictly true. The influence of group norms is very powerful but some people resist them for reasons of their own and do not conform. c) This statement is true. d) Game playing roles are those adopted by people who are pursuing ends of their own, for complex psychological reasons which they themselves may not understand. These are frequently at odds with what the workteam is trying to achieve. Somebody who keeps the workteam cheerful is playing a helpful social role e) As we saw in question d) not all roles contribute to workteam performance. In fact, game playing roles frequently undermine workteam performance.

5 Summary

In this part of our unit we looked at

* GROUP NORMS or expected ways of behaving in groups

  Norms can develop about a wide range of things such as

  * aims of the members
  * the work people do
  * opinions, attitudes, beliefs etc

  The group can put pressure on individuals to influence them to behave in accepted ways

* GROUP ROLES or the functions people perform in the group. We said helpful roles may be

  WORK-RELATED

  SOCIAL

  Work-related roles may include

  * Task Leader
  * Team Coordinator
  * Progress Monitor
  * Contributor

  Social roles may include

  * Social leader
  * Mediator
  * Group Supporter
  * Commentator

  Unhelpful roles we termed GAME PLAYING roles. These may include

  * Attacker
  * Team Blocker
  * Outsider

Workteams have

* POWER
* INFLUENCE

They have the power and influence to

* Modify individual behaviour
* Select unofficial task leaders
* Induce conformity to group norms

Power and influence can work <u>for</u> or <u>against</u> the interests of the workplace.

PART D BUILDING A WORKTEAM

1 Introduction

Now that we've seen some of the influences which operate within workteams, let's use this part of our unit to consider how we can build an effective workteam.

Let's begin by identifying the stages that any developing workteam is likely to go through.

2 The Development of a Workteam

We saw that work-related and social roles need to be fulfilled in any workteam.

Similarly, as a new workteam settles down and develops it needs some careful thought given to the work aspect and the social aspect.

A newly-formed workteam needs a lot of information and guidance in both these aspects. The team needs time to shake down together.

This stage is called

ORIENTATION

Let's look briefly at the two aspects, starting with the work aspect.

ACTIVITY 47
Time guide
3 mins

Imagine yourself as a member of a newly-formed workteam.

Jot down two of the things you would be likely to be concerned about regarding the work itself.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

You might well have thought of these, though, necessarily this list doesn't cover all possible causes of concern.

* What information will you need?

* How do you get it?

* What materials will you need?

* What other things do you need to do your job?

* Who does what?

Now let's look at the social aspect of workteam development.

ACTIVITY 48
Time guide
3 mins

Once again, imagine yourself a member of a newly-formed workteam. You will need to develop working relationships with other members of the team. Jot down two things which might concern you regarding the social aspect.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

You might have thought of concerns like these:

* What do other members of the group expect from you?

* What can you expect from other members of the group?

* How do you address other people in the group? Do you use first names or surnames?

* How are you supposed to behave to the rest of the group?

In a new situation, people look for some sort of guidance as to what is appropriate. At this early stage people will be unsure of themselves and may look for cues from the leader or from someone else who seems to be influential in the group.

In the last two activities we've been thinking about how we would feel and the things which would concern us if we joined an established workteam. Imagine how much more difficult it is when <u>everybody</u> is new to the workteam.

Given time, the workteam becomes familiar with the demands of the job and with each other but there is frequently a fairly difficult period to go through first in which there are tensions in the work and social dimensions. This is known as the CONFLICT stage.

ACTIVITY 49
Time guide
5 mins

Imagine settling down in a new workteam. Everybody is new to the job and new to each other.

Jot down four examples of conflict which are likely to have to be worked through in the early stages.

* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

Depending on your experience, your list could probably be very long. Here are my suggestions which you'll see I have divided into work-related and social tensions.

Work-related tensions

* Workteam members see their jobs differently from how the rest see them so they may be accused of 'failing to deliver' or doing the wrong thing, which they resent

* Workteam members have different views of what is important and what needs to be done first

Social tensions

* Some people get on better with the rest of the team than others which can cause hurt feelings, unpopularity and separate 'camps' forming in the team

* Some characters are more assertive than others. They may overwhelm quieter members or remain very much individuals who don't readily conform to the developing norms of the team.

Before it can become an effective workteam, these problems need to be sorted out.

ACTIVITY 50
Time guide
5 mins

Jot down four ways in which, as a team member, you could get over some of the tensions which are likely to arise during the conflict stage.

* _____

* _____

* _____

* _____

Once again, depending on your experience, you could have written a very long list. Here are just a few suggestions which will help the workteam through this difficult period.

* listen to what the others are saying rather than sticking rigidly to your own opinion

* exchange ideas, information and opinions - your perception of the situation can only change in the light of more information received

* whatever you think about the personalities involved, concentrate on developing a good working relationship which enables you to get the job done first and foremost

* talk through or work out personality clashes in the group

EXTENSION 5
page 97

Working through this stage demands an effort from everybody. If you're particularly concerned with how to lead a workteam through the stages of development you might like to work through another unit in this series, Team Leading.

Once these tensions are resolved, the workteam can begin to see itself as a team and function as a team, instead of a group of individuals, for the first time. There has been a considerable amount of 'give and take' and everybody has settled down, more or less, to an understanding of what is required and of their role in the team, probably with a more realistic view then they had originally. This stage is know as COHESION.

SELF CHECK 13
Time guide
5 mins

Complete the following statements with a suitable word or group of words.

a) The two dimensions to workteam development are _____ and _____.

b) The need for the workteam to settle down together and find out about the job and each other is called the _____ stage.

c) This is often followed by a period of _____.

d) When groups begin to see themselves as a team and have developed accepted ways of behaving and doing things, we could say that they have developed some level of group _____.

The answers to this self check are here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. a) The two dimensions of workteam development are work and social. b) The 'shaking down' period is called the orientation stage which is often followed by a period of c) conflict. d) When the problems are resolved, however, and the group begins to think of itself as a team, a level of group cohesion has been reached.

Finally, the team reaches the stage of WORKTEAM FUNCTIONING and operates effectively as a team.

REFERENCE 4
page 98

In 'Understanding Organisations' C B Handy gives us another similar model for the development of a workteam. He defines his stages in development as

FORMING
STORMING
NORMING
PERFORMING

However, I don't want to give the impression that effective functioning is something that can be achieved once and for all, with all conflict put behind you.

A workteam is dynamic, continually growing and changing.

ACTIVITY 51
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down three possible changes which may affect the nature of your workteam.

* _____

* _____

* _____

Here are some typical changes which would affect a workteam. Of course, there could be many more.

* Somebody leaves. If they are replaced the workteam has to adapt to the new member. If they are not replaced, the workteam has to adapt to a change in the workload.

* The job changes. New equipment, new technology, a new product or service can all affect how the workteam operates and the relationships within the team.

* The management changes. Even though the job remains the same and the workteam is unchanged, management may see the job differently, may put a different emphasis on things which will demand quite a difficult adaption from the workteam.

Now let's look at each of these stages in a little more detail to see how we can contribute effectively to the development of the workteam.

3 Orientation

In order to develop, members of a workteam need to be in regular contact with each other, in other words to communicate with each other and to be influenced by what each other is saying and doing. This is called interaction.

Obviously, we talk to each other, perhaps we write to each other (memos or sets of instructions for instance) and we may show each other something we're doing or, for example, demonstrate how something works.

But we also have much more subtle ways of communicating with each other which may not involve saying a word.

ACTIVITY 52
Time guide
2 mins

Jot down two ways in which we communicate with each other which do not depend on the actual words we say.

* _____

* _____

We communicate in dozens of different ways. Here are just four suggestions.

* The tone of voice we use or the ways in which we say things

* The ways in which we look at each other or the expressions on our faces when we communicate. For example, do we frown or smile?

* Casual glances

* Gestures

What we are saying may be strictly connected with work. At the same time, however, we can convey a very powerful message about our feelings about the person we're talking to.

During the first stage of the development of a workteam, communications of one kind or another are particularly important. Workteam members will be looking for cues from other people so as to establish where they stand, what is expected of them and what they can expect from other people.

The supervisor needs to give the group time to settle down and can do quite a lot to help workteam members develop as part of the workteam.

ACTIVITY 53
Time guide
3 mins

Try to make a suggestion as to how you as supervisor could help a workteam develop in the forming or orientation stage. Jot down your response here. I've given a suggestion to get you started.

eg encourage workteam members to get to know each other better

* _____

There are a number of things you could have said. For example

* Try to communicate your work expectations of them clearly

* Try to encourage informal relationships, or informal links

* Consider ways in which you might be able to help make the group attractive to its members

* Perhaps you can do something to help make work fun sometimes

Sooner or later the workteam will shake down as a group. However, as supervisor, with a little patience, understanding and thought, you can help the process along its way.

4 Conflict

We've already seen that conflict is likely to be a particular problem whilst a workteam is shaking down together but that, because we are continually having to adapt to change, it will also recur over and over again.

So far we've focused particularly on four likely sources of conflict:

* personality clashes

* conflicts arising because different people see things in quite different ways

* conflicts arising because important work-related or social roles are not adopted by the team

* conflicts arising from individual 'game-playing' which is at odds with what the workteam should be trying to achieve

However, we can also experience conflict within ourselves or, as a member of the workteam, with other groups in the same workplace.

Let me show you what I mean.

ACTIVITY 54
Time guide
3 mins

Suppose you are a member of a project team investigating ways of computerising processes in your office or factory. You can see that there is a lot to be said for the idea. As a supervisor, though, you can see that putting the data required on to the computer in the first place is going to create a great deal of extra work for your already hard-pressed workteam and you don't think they'll be very pleased with it or you.

You are suffering a clash of roles as a member of the project team and a supervisor. This can lead to conflict and considerable unhappiness at work.

Jot down one other example of a clash of role related to your job which you can think of.

* _____

_____

Of course, I can't know exactly what you've said but here are two typical examples of role clash which a supervisor might suffer.

* As a supervisor you may feel you have to keep your team working whatever: as a union member you may have to withhold your labour

* As a supervisor your workteam may expect you to look after their interests first and foremost when you deal with managers: managers may consider you are part of the management team and expect you to put the interests of the whole workplace before those of your workteam

You may also suffer from a clash of roles between work and home which can result in conflict.

ACTIVITY 55
Time guide
2 mins

Jot down two examples of how you think somebody in your position could have a conflict of roles between work and home.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

Once again, there could be many possible conflicts of role. Here are just three.

* The expectations of our workmates that we'll work overtime may clash with those of our husbands and wives who may expect us to spend time doing things at home in our role as their marital partners.

* Working mothers may find that what is expected of them at work (the hours they work, for example, or the need to travel) conflicts with their role as mother.

* People working nightshift may find that the need to sleep during the day conflicts with their role in the family who sleep at night.

So we can see that role conflict can arise at work

* when we have to perform more than one role at once

  eg role at work and role at home

* when there are conflicting expectations of our role

  eg the workteam and management may have conflicting expectations of us.

A conflict of roles can be very trying for the individual concerned. Sometimes there is not a lot you can do about it - working mothers, for instance, will probably always feel torn in two directions - but you may find what we go on to say about handling conflict contains some useful advice to apply to yourself.

ACTIVITY 56
Time guide
1 min

As a supervisor would you say that conflict is always a bad thing, damaging to relations and to the amount of work done?

YES/NO

I hope we can agree that it isn't necessarily a bad thing. You may have been tempted to answer 'it all depends' and you would be quite right.

Conflict can be destructive or constructive. It depends on a number of factors and on how it is handled.

As a supervisor you have to watch for conflict situations in your workteam or with other teams and weigh up the probable outcome each time before you decide how to handle it.

ACTIVITY 57
Time guide
2 mins

Which workteam do you think will handle conflict best?

Team A talk to each other a lot, openly critical sometimes, but have good informal relationships and certainly put their backs into the job when they have to.

Team B a quiet team, don't say a lot to each other, don't have much to do with each other. The attitude seems to be "You mind your business and I'll mind mine".

* _____

I think conflict would be better handled by Team A. There may be fewer blazing rows in Team B but what grievances there are are likely to smoulder on unresolved.

Conflict, however it's dealt with, is likely to be resolved better if a workteam are open, fairly frank and generally supportive of each other.

However, any conflict will become destructive if

it becomes personal
it drags on too long
it becomes too frequent
it becomes too intense

Let's see what can be constructive about conflict.

ACTIVITY 58
Time guide
4 mins

There's a blazing row at work.

However, by the end of the day, the people involved have talked over their differences, agreed a different way of tackling the problem and parted on fairly good terms - in fact, they couldn't help laughing about how mad they had got in the morning.

Jot down <u>three</u> possible constructive outcomes of conflict from this situation.

eg it relieves tension

* _____

* _____

* _____

Here are my suggestions though these are by no means all.

* it relieves tension when conflict is brought into the open and dealt with

* it gets people talking

* it generates new ideas

* by bringing issues into the open it allows people to work on and change their relationships with each other.

Similarly, conflict between one group and another can be quite constructive and improve performance. Friendly rivalry can be quite a spur to performance.

Look at this, for example.

> "Look at this stack of queries. Data Control have been having a purge this week and throwing stuff back in all directions. They haven't even tried to sort it out themselves or sort out the genuine queries. Well, we'll show them."

I expect we can agree that quite a lot of work would be done that week.

However, supposing that comment had finished like this.

> "Well, that's it as far as I'm concerned. I'm not doing another thing to help them out. Bunch of self-important idiots just because they're directly under the Accountant.
>
> Don't bother with that analysis they were asking for. If this is going to be their attitude they can wait. We've managed perfectly well all these years without their fancy ideas. We'll just see who they have to turn to to get them out of trouble when their computer breaks down."

ACTIVITY 59
Time guide
4 mins

Using this comment as a guide (but feel free to use other ideas of your own) jot down four destructive outcomes which could arise from the conflict between the two groups.

* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

Here are my suggestions but you may well have thought of others too.

* Conflict can result in a breakdown of cooperation and a refusal to do any work together ('Don't bother with that analysis . . .')

* Conflict makes one group highly critical of the other, often unreasonably so ('Bunch of self-important idiots . . .')

* Similarly, conflict tends to make one group see itself in a very favourable light, often with little justification ('We'll just see who they have to turn to . . .')

* Attitudes tend to become rather smug and complacent about the group's own work ('We've managed perfectly well . . .') because all criticism and blame is focused on the 'opposition'.

Clearly, none of this is good for the level of work being done. As a supervisor, you have to keep conflict between your workteam and another at the level of friendly rivalry and try to ensure that it doesn't become too widespread and destructive.

SELF CHECK 14
Time guide
3 mins

We mentioned earlier four conditions in which conflict will always be destructive and which you have to avoid.

Complete the following statement with a suitable word or groups of words to show what those conditions are.

Conflict becomes destructive if:

* it is prolonged _____

* it becomes too _____

* it becomes too _____

* it becomes too _____

The answers to this self check are here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. Conflict becomes destructive if it is prolonged too long or becomes too personal, too intense or too frequent.

So how do we tackle conflict?

We said earlier that it is best handled in a working atmosphere which is open, frank and supportive.

You can't just set about creating that once conflict has already arisen - it needs to be the prevailing atmosphere in any case.

It needs to be handled POSITIVELY if possible. Look for solutions, not for somewhere to put the blame.

Above all, it's important to

AVOID WIN/LOSE SITUATIONS

ACTIVITY 60
Time guide
4 mins

Suppose there is conflict between two workteam members who find it difficult to work together. One is moved out into work which is felt to be lower grade and the other one remains where he was. A win/lose situation.

Jot down two feelings which each of them are likely to have which will affect their behaviour at work.

The winner

* _____
* _____

The loser

* _____
* _____

We may not have thought of the same responses but I hope we can agree that these are likely.

The Winner

* knows he is the winner. He may become over-confident as a result and become careless and less productive than before
* he is likely to feel in every way superior to the loser - the conflict isn't just confined to the one issue over which they fell out

The Loser

* his self-confidence takes a knock. He may become tense and irritable at work. In the short term this may make him work harder but is equally likely to have the opposite effect
* to preserve self-esteem, he's likely to want to find somebody to blame. Future cooperation is unlikely
* he's likely to feel badly about the workplace as a whole and to be inclined to be very critical of anything which happens

The same sorts of feelings and attitudes are aroused in win/lose situations if whole workteams are involved rather than just individuals.

A win/lose situation generally has an unfavourable influence on losers and winners.

Now let's look at some ways of handling conflicts as they arise. There is no one best way of handling conflict. As we said earlier, as a supervisor, you have to observe what is happening and weigh up the probable outcome of any course of action you consider.

4.1 Withdrawal

ACTIVITY 61
Time guide
2 mins

You know two members of your workteam have had a row but you don't know what it was about. You decide to do nothing and pretend you don't know about it.

Jot down two possible outcomes of your doing this.

* _____

* _____

You might think doing nothing hardly counts as a 'course of action' but it might sometimes be your considered view that this is the best thing to do.

The problem might be very short term and may simply go away if ignored.

On the other hand, if it doesn't go away, it's likely to come back even stronger as a result of not being dealt with satisfactorily when it could be 'nipped in the bud'.

Which you do is a calculated risk based on your understanding of the situation and the characters involved.

4.2 Suppression

Rather more obviously active than withdrawing from the conflict is suppression or 'smoothing things over'. Perhaps you persuade a workteam member to give something one more try or you persuade one person to back down over an issue now in exchange for a promise that you'll do something for them next time.

ACTIVITY 62
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down one advantage and one disadvantage of smoothing things over as a means of coping with conflict.

Advantage

* _____

Disadvantage

* _____

You may have thought of a number of things but I hope we can agree that they hinge on the fact that smoothing things over provides an immediate solution (which we would probably see as an advantage) but, in the long-term, we still haven't really resolved the issue at stake and so, just as may happen when we decide to do nothing, the conflict may re-surface later worse than ever.

When we're busy and under time pressure smoothing things over sometimes seems the only possible course of action open to us. At the time it may well be but the important thing is not to forget about the underlying conflict because it may not have gone away.

ACTIVITY 63
Time guide
3 mins

Suppose with the way work is currently allocated, there is not as much overtime as there was some months back. In fact, though there are two workteams operating, there is only enough overtime for one workteam and this has become a source of considerable conflict between the two workteams.

As a supervisor what would you do to resolve the conflict? Jot down two possible approaches, not including withdrawal or suppression which wouldn't really be possible in this case.

* _____

* _____

I expect that while you were thinking about this you realised that you would have to discuss the problem with the other supervisor and perhaps with your manager. But what then?

Here are two likely courses of action though you may well have thought of more.

* Decide with the other supervisor what seemed to you a fair allocation of overtime and tell the workteams that this was what was going to happen

* Work out a solution which took into account the views of both workteams, perhaps by involving them in the discussion

In the first approach, you dominate the wishes of the workteam and override the conflict. In the second, you look for a compromise solution. Let's look at the advantages and disadvantages of those two approaches.

4.3 Domination

You decide what should happen and make sure that it does. You may well feel that, as a supervisor, this is what you're paid for and you put up with any ill-feelings which result from your approach.

To an extent, you're right.

ACTIVITY 64
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down one advantage and one disadvantage of dominating such a conflict.

Advantage

* _____

Disadvantage

* _____

I hope we can agree that the main advantage is that it provides a swift, clear solution to the problem - for the time being. That may be the end of the matter and any resentment felt by either party may be shortlived and may be directed against you rather than against each other.

The disadvantages are that

* you still may not have got to the bottom of the problem, just found a short-term solution

* since neither party had any say in the solution they may not feel much commitment to the decision

* if your decision appears to favour one point of view more than another you may have created what feels like a win/lose situation to the people concerned with all the difficulties that brings

* by dominating other people you have to an extent created a win/lose situation with you as the winner and everybody else as the losers

4.4 Compromise

Another possible approach to conflict is to look for a compromise - to use what we can of everybody's viewpoint and, on the basis of give and take, to work out a solution which everybody will accept.

This has the clear advantage that there should be no outright winners or losers.

It is an approach which we use a lot and we have been brought up to regard it highly. Wage negotiations operate by compromise - unions and management start from fairly extreme positions and work towards a compromise, each gaining something and losing something, until they can agree on some 'midway point'. It's very important to successful wage negotiations that neither side is seen to lose face and that neither side absolutely routs the other one. We know from past experience that that just lays up a store of bitterness and unresolved grievances for the future.

ACTIVITY 65
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down two disadvantages that may arise from resolving a conflict by looking for a compromise. Think about your own workteam or about wage negotiations you know about to give you some ideas.

* _____

* _____

A typical list might include:

* finding a satisfactory compromise is very time-consuming

* since nobody gets exactly what they want commitment to the final solution may be rather low

* other issues beside the sources of conflict immediately under discussion tend to be dragged in

* a compromise may not be the best solution: it's simply the one which everybody can contribute to and accept in part. (Perhaps you've heard the definition of a camel: a horse designed by a committee - a compromise in other words.)

and, as we said before, if compromise is a well-established remedy then both sides tend to start from a more extreme viewpoint than they otherwise might.

4.5 Integration and collaboration

Many of the disadvantages we've talked about here can be overcome if you can get people involved in a positive and purposeful way.

In an earlier activity we supposed that you had a problem with overtime resulting from the way work was currently allocated.

You might deal with the conflict in any of the ways we've mentioned, but if you could involve members from both workteams in discussion of the work allocation itself, perhaps the methods used or the scheduling, you might come up with some novel and constructive ideas for solving the problem in the long term.

ACTIVITY 66
Time guide
3 mins

Jot down two advantages and two disadvantages of getting people who are in conflict with each other to sit down and work together on another, and perhaps, different problem.

Advantage

* _____

* _____

Disadvantage

* _____

* _____

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages and you could well have thought of some others from those I'll mention.

Advantages:

* it 'draws fire'. People can channel their energies into something positive rather than into their dispute with each other.

* they have a common interest in finding a solution to the problem you've given them so they have to work together. This may rub off on the issue over which they disagree

* they get to know each other better and may appreciate each other's jobs and points of view better

* the original source of conflict may become relatively unimportant once they get going on the new project

* new and creative ideas are likely to emerge which you couldn't think of on your own

Disadvantages:

* it takes time to set up and time to run. It may be considered too expensive an exercise unless there's a clear need for such a project to be undertaken

* you may not have the right people collaborating on the project. The fact that people disagree over one topic doesn't necessarily make them the best people to work on another related topic.

However, despite the disadvantges, this approach is the most favoured one if you are dealing with a deep-seated problem to which you need to find a long-term and fundamentally new solution.

It works equally well for groups as for individual workteam members.

SELF CHECK 15
Time guide
10 mins

Before we go on try this self check to help you weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of the approaches to handling conflict which we've looked at.

You only need to think of one advantage or disadvantage for each.

APPROACH	ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE	SOLUTION IMMEDIATE/LONG TERM
Withdrawal			
Suppression			
Domination			
Compromise			
Integration/ Collaboration			

The answers to this self check are here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. The advantages of withdrawal is that the problem may go away without your having to do anything. If not, though, it will come back worse than ever. It looks like an immediate solution.

Suppression avoids a row and provides an immediate solution. However, you still haven't 'grasped the nettle' of the conflict which may resurface later.

Domination provides an immediate solution - you say what is to happen. It's a quick and clear solution to the problem in the short term. The disadvantages are that you still may not have got to the bottom of the problem and neither party may give your decisions their whole-hearted support. It's also very easy to create a win/lose situation with yourself, or the party you appear to favour, as the winner.

A compromise is a time-honoured way of handling conflict and it produces a solution which is acceptable to all sides. However, it's very time consuming and tempts people who know that a compromise will be the result to adopt an extreme position. Other issues tend to be brought in as bargaining points and a solution which everybody finds acceptable may not be the solution which is in the real interests of the workplace. Since nobody has got exactly what they wanted, commitment to the solution may be a bit half-hearted too. It offers a more or less immediate solution but, unless it's carefully handled, can just lay up more trouble for the future.

Integration/collaboration takes people's energies away from the source of conflict and on to other matters. They have to work together so share a common interest in getting the job done and may come to appreciate each other better as a result. New ideas may result from the collaboration. Once again it's time-consuming and you may not be using the right people to find the best solution to the problem. The solution is a long-term one.

5 Cohesion

Finally, let's look at how we can encourage cohesion - the 'togetherness' which an effective workteam enjoys.

ACTIVITY 67
Time guide
3 mins

Here is a list of some of the features of a cohesive group.

Cohesive groups:

have a lot of influence over individual members

are attractive to members

have members who largely conform to group norms

provide a sense of security to individual members

have good working relations between members

have members whose output or level of performance is similar

Do you think that cohesive groups will necessarily be those who do the best or the most work?

YES/NO

I hope we can agree that they won't.

A cohesive group works well together as a team and, as a supervisor, you're unlikely to have to spend much time ironing out differences between members. However, a cohesive group tends to put the interests of the group first and they may not be the same as the interests of the workplace as a whole.

So, as a supervisor, you have two concerns:

TO ENCOURAGE COHESION IN YOUR WORKTEAM

TO MAKE SURE THE WORKTEAM HAS THE SAME INTERESTS AS THE WORKPLACE

We'll look at these two concerns separately although, not surprisingly, they overlap at points and you might take a particular course of action to ensure both aspects.

ACTIVITY 68
Time guide
5 mins

Knowing what you do about the importance of informal relationships, roles within groups and ways of handling conflict, jot down three things you could do to encourage the cohesion of your workteam.

* _____

* _____

* _____

There are all sorts of things you could have suggested in response to this activity - it covers a lot of ground. Here are some of the things I would try.

* encourage friendly relations between workteam members. Give them a chance to be together and to chat together and, where possible, allow people who would like to work together to do so.

* make use of the personalities of your workteam members to ensure that they can make a contribution to the team which suits them best. Make use of the one who cracks jokes to cheer everyone up. Make use of the born pessimist to anticipate problems you'll have to find a way round

* encourage an open, participative atmosphere in which everybody feels free to discuss how the workteam is operating and the job in hand

* handle conflict openly, amicably and positively

* involve the workteam in discussion and pass on any information they might like to know

* make sure that you value contributions individuals make but reward the team as a whole. Singling out one person for special reward will tend to break up the team

* make work fun. One of the factors which keeps a group together is its attractiveness to its members. If work is friendly and fun, you're far more inclined to get out of bed to go to work in the first place

We'll assume that you've got a good team spirit and a good atmosphere in your workteam and have no troubles with absenteeism, sickness or high staff turnover which might suggest that people are unhappy about being in your workteam. What can you do to ensure that that team spirit is exercised in the interests of getting the job done?

ACTIVITY 69
Time guide
10 mins

As we said earlier, how we ensure this overlaps or develops from the things we do to encourage cohesion in the first place. Look again at your response to the last activity and my response and jot down four things which you could do specifically to make sure group cohesion was to the benefit of the workplace. Take your time over this one. It takes quite a bit of thinking about.

* _____
* _____
* _____
* _____

Here are some of the points I would check though these are by no means all and you may well have thought of others.

* Involve the workteam as much as possible in decisions which affect them. Genuinely ask for their opinion.

* Make sure everyone is involved as far as possible in what the workteam is doing. This means, among other things, making sure everyone is kept informed about what is going on.

* Check the balance of roles in the workteam. We saw that social roles tend to support work-related roles. Make sure that there are no obvious omissions and, if necessary, take on a particular role yourself.

* Convince the workteam that what they have to do is worthwhile. Perhaps knowing about a big order or seeing the company's financial statement or having an opportunity to visit a supplier or customer or even another location or department would help in this.

* Give the workteam clear objectives and a clear guide to any limits on what they can do, such as time and cost.

* Only ask them to do something which the team as a whole is capable of and equipped to do. Nothing destroys cohesion like persistent failure to achieve something which was too difficult in the first place.

* Having asked the team to do something, treat them like responsible adults and let them get on with it.

* Give them some feedback on how well they're doing. If they have rushed to get an order finished, tell them that it was actually despatched on time; don't simply take their effort for granted and go on to the next job. Similarly, if performance wasn't up to scratch, tell them and invite them to suggest ways of improving next time.

* Treat people as individuals, according to their personalities, and what you know motivates them, but reward the team as a whole.

5.3 Maintaining Cohesion

When we were talking about conflict we said that, although it was a stage in workteam development which you could expect to work through, it was also something which you could expect to recur as the workteam adapts to changes of staff, role, job demands and so on.

The same applies to cohesion. It isn't a steady state which, once you've achieved, you have for good. It needs to be worked at and looked after if it is to be maintained.

Here's an example of the sort of situation where you would have to take action to restore cohesion.

ACTIVITY 70
Time guide
8 mins

Your workteam works on product design modifications. Some months ago someone new joined the team straight from college. At first everything went well and the newcomer seemed to be making a good contribution to team efforts.

Perhaps, too good.

Now, a lot of people seem to be asking this person for advice when they are stumped by sticky problems. Some resentment has arisen between the newcomer and an older team member who used to be sought out by other people as someone with a good deal of experience.

Instead of the happy cooperative atmosphere which used to exist, the workteam is developing into two opposing groups. Many of the younger people are supporting the newcomer as an informal leader. Some of the older members seem to resent any ideas from younger team members they regard as upstarts. No-one seems to make much effort to mediate disagreements between the two factions and work is suffering.

* _____

_____

* _____

_____

Let's take a look at what seems to have happened.

The newcomer has upset group norms. In other words the established patterns of behaviour about who best to turn to for advice have been disturbed. The older team member probably feels threatened by it, and the older members of the team are possibly siding with him out of loyalty. Perhaps they've been together a long time.

The workteam isn't functioning as an effective social group anymore, so some crucial social roles are probably no longer being taken on by team members.

'Mediator' appears to be one of these neglected roles which is why you might consider taking it on yourself.

We need the workteam to function again, encompassing what the newcomer can contribute. After all, experience and new ideas both have a part to play.

As we've said, conflicts are best solved. If they're pushed into the background or if compromise solutions are reached no-one is really satisfied. For these reasons, my choice of action would be to get both informal leaders involved in a joint problem solving exercise. If they each learned to value each other's contributions, towards achieving something together, it could help. Once their relationship settled down, the rest of the workteam would find it easier to adjust.

SELF CHECK 16
Time guide
8 mins

Suppose you are supervisor of a product development team. Two members of the team have a serious disagreement over a technical matter and the rift between them is affecting the cohesion of the team which has started to exclude these two from discussions as far as possible.

You can't really blame them. The two team members seem unable to take part in discussions about the job without insulting each other. You have a feeling that there's something in what both of them have to say. They seem to have different perceptions of the problem, but pride seems to be stopping them from seeing each other's point of view.

Here are four suggested approaches for you to adopt as team leader. Put a tick beside the one which you feel would be best for long term relations in the group and jot down why you would not choose each of the other three.

(a) Make a decision yourself and announce it.

(b) Consider both sides of the argument and decide who's right.

(c) Act as mediator while the two sit down and talk out their differences.

(d) See if you can get one of the members moved to another workteam.

Reasons for rejecting:

a _____

_____

b _____

_____

c _____

_____

d _____

_____

The answers to this self check are here in the following words, so you'll need to check your answers carefully. Of course, how you decide to handle conflict is always a personal decision and there are no answers which would be right in every case. However, I hope we can agree on the following comments.

(a) Make a decision yourself and announce it.

Possible. It would solve the immediate problem and show you were the boss. However, if you agree with one rather than the other, you may seem to create a win/lose situation which will be bad for team relations in the long term.

(b) Consider both sides of the argument and decide who is right.

An imporvement on (a) but all the same difficulties we noted in (a) are likely to arise.

(c) Act as mediator while the two sit down and talk out their differences.

The preferred solution. You get to the bottom of the dispute this way and tackle the conflict openly and positively. Since both parties are fully involved in the discussion and treated equally they are more likely to accept the final solution and the conflict between them should be resolved in the long term as well as the immediate future.

(d) See if you can get one of the members moved to another workteam.

This would create a clear win/lose situation which could be quite damaging to both in the long term as well as undermining the cohesion of the workteam.

6 Team Development

Some organisations have tried to improve their workteams through special training programmes. These normally focus on the development of teams as social groups. The aim is to encourage workteams and their supervisors to be sensitive to each other as people. If relations within the workteam can be improved this should help them develop a better team approach.

ACTIVITY 71
Time guide
3 mins

Here are some comments made by members of a cohesive workteam functioning well. Read the comments and then jot down three suggestions for the kind of behaviour we should show towards each other if the workteam is to work well as a social group.

If you think of other points which are nothing to do with the comments jot these down too.

Supervisor: 'That last batch was a bit of a shambles. I know it was Friday afternoon but we were way out of spec. Any suggestions for doing better this week?'

Supervisor: 'How's that day release course going, Mary? Are you getting much out of it? I expect you've got some exams coming up before long, haven't you? Have a word with me nearer the time and we'll see if we can get you a bit of study leave.'

Supervisor: 'Thanks very much for getting that done this morning. I appreciate it.'

Any workteam member: 'Well, he's not really saying that, is he? Give the man a chance and let him explain what he really means. Come on, Bill, spit it out.'

Any workteam member or the supervisor: 'I'm afraid I got this wrong. We've overstocked on interleaving paper and it's not a standard size. What do you suggest we do?'

* _____

* _____

* _____

Well, perhaps those comments set you thinking. I would sum up the points they made like this though you may equally well have thought of other things too.

We should:

* be open with other people in the workteam

* listen without being critical

* show a genuine interest in workteam members

* show our appreciation for the workteam's efforts

* be patient and tolerant with each other

* be willing to admit to problems and mistakes

TEAM DEVELOPMENT is a term used for a type of training which tries to achieve some of these things which help workteams to function as social groups. So, the training is focused on the workteam including the supervisor. The approach is therefore different from the more usual one of selecting individuals for training courses. Team development is almost always carried out away from the normal place of employment by people outside the organisation. In other words by consultants who aren't normally members of the organisation. This helps people overcome their natural feelings of doubt about being completely open and honest with colleagues and supervisors. In other words, they feel more relaxed and less contrained than they might at work.

SELF CHECK 17
Time guide
3 mins

Let's review some of the things we've said so far in this section with a self check. Complete the following sentences with a suitable word or words.

(a) A major aim of team development is to encourage workteams and team leaders to be more _____ to each other as people.

(b) An example of something which team development may achieve is to help the workteam as a working unit function better as a _____ group.

(c) Team development focuses its attention on _____ and their supervisors as a working unit.

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. For each sentence we'll give a word you could have used. Other words with the same or similar meaning would be equally suitable. a) open or sensitive b) social c) workteams.

The outside consultants used in team development programmes have three main functions.

* They get in touch with everyone involved in the workteam individually. This is to find out what everyone thinks is impairing the functioning of the workteam.

* They get the group together and give them this information without saying who gave it to them.

* They persuade the group to discuss the things which are affecting their performance openly and honestly.

The aim is to get the workteam to recognise, propose and decide on solutions to their own problem.

Often supervisors and team leaders find the process threatening at first.

ACTIVITY 72
Time guide
3 mins

Spend a few minutes to think about why supervisors and team leaders may start out by feeling threatened by team development. Write a suggestion in the space provided below. I've entered one myself to get you started.

eg Supervisors are not always used to taking criticism from their workteams.

* _____

There are any number of personal reasons someone may feel threatened. A typical response might have included one of the following:

* The supervisor may begin to feel unsure about how to relate to the workteam members

* Supervisors are sometimes not used to being open with their workteams

* Sometimes they're not sure how to handle constructive comments or criticisms from workteam members

Sometimes people learn to be more open with each other. Sometimes people find it hard to change their ways of behaving. When this happens a greater understanding of the reasons why others in the group behave as they do sometimes helps improve relations.

Let's end this section with a self check.

SELF CHECK 18 Decide whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE.

Time guide
3 mins

(a) Building effective workteams involves developing good relations between members and leaders.

TRUE/FALSE

(b) Cohesive groups often make more effective teams.

TRUE/FALSE

(c) Building an effective team means building an effective social group.

TRUE/FALSE

The answer to this self check is here in the following words, so you'll need to check out your answers carefully. The best answer to all three statements is true. We've tried to stress the importance of understanding people and developing good relations throughout this unit. We hope that now you've finished the text you'll feel better able to improve relations in your workteam when the need arises.

7 Summary

The four stages of workteam development:

ORIENTATION

CONFLICT

COHESION

PERFORMANCE

CONFLICT can be constructive or destructive. It is always destructive if:

it is prolonged too long

it becomes too personal

it becomes too intense

it becomes too frequent

CONFLICT is best handled in a positive, open way in which all parties have the chance to state their views and work together to find a solution. Other approaches tend only to provide short term solutions

COHESIVE groups make good workteams provided their interests can be made to match those of the workplace

TEAM DEVELOPMENT is a type of training designed to encourage the workteam to function well as a social group.

PART E PERFORMANCE CHECK

Time guide
60 mins

1 End Check

You may now review your understanding of the unit as a whole by completing this group of questions. DON'T GUESS THE ANSWERS. If you're not sure, flick back into the unit and check before responding.

If you are still unsure then put a question mark against your response before proceeding.

TRUE/FALSE

Respond to each statement by writing TRUE or FALSE in the space provided.

(1) A command group is made up of people who work as a team to deal with a particular task or problem. _____

(2) Groups which exist because of the demands of the job and the way the workplace is organised are formal groups. _____

(3) Cohesive groups often make more effective teams. _____

(4) A limited amount of conflict can be helpful to workteam development. _____

(5) The type of work done, the ways in which people are managed and the technology people use have an influence on the nature of workgroups. _____

(6) Conflict between workteams is always damaging to their performance. _____

(7) Group norms are accepted standards of behaviour within a group. _____

(8) The role of mediator may be an example of an informal social role in a workteam. _____

COMPLETION

Respond by completing each sentence with a suitable word or words.

9 A group of people made up of a supervisor and workteam members is often called a _____ group.

10 A group with which a person identifies or uses for comparisons is called a _____ group.

11 A negative reference group is a group with whom you _____ _____.

12 Workteams need to develop in two ways: a work-related development and a _____ development.

13 The four stages in workteam development are _____, _____, _____ and _____.

14 In a well-balanced workteam you need _____ _____ roles and _____ roles.

15 Conflict is _____ if it clears the air, relieves tension and generates some new ideas.

16 Conflict with other groups tends to reduce conflict within the group and increase group _____.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Respond to each question by putting a tick beside the ONE answer which is most correct.

17 A command group is an example of:

(a) infonmal group

(b) formal group

(c) reference group

(d) social group

18 A supervisor is experiencing conflicting demands. The workteam members expect one thing and higher management another. This is an example of

(a) group cohesion

(b) intergroup conflict

(c) intragroup conflict

(d) role conflict

19 Perception means

(a) being able to distinguish reality from fantasy

(b) being particularly shrewd

(c) our values and beliefs

(d) the way in which we see and interpret things going on around us

20 Which of the following statements would you say gives the best advice to supervisors handling conflict?

(a) Always assert your own decision since you're in charge

(b) Avoid win/lose situations

(c) Look for a compromise solution

(d) Avoid discussions because they're time consuming

21 Team development focuses attention on

(a) individuals

(b) particular senior managers

(c) supervisors

(d) workteams and their supervisors

22 Conflict has arisen between two of your workteam members. Which of the following approaches would be most likely to produce a lasting solution?

(a) Get one or other of them to back down

(b) Sit them both down and get them to air their grievances with you as a mediator

(c) Use your position as team leader to decide which of them is right

(d) Let the rest of the workteam vote on who is right and take the majority decision

23 Which of the following statements best describes why it's best to carry out team development away from the job site with outside consultants?

(a) Outside consultants are often better trainers

(b) Organisations often don't have the expertise to do it themselves

(c) Workteams and supervisors are likely to feel more relaxed and less constrained by colleagues and supervisors

(d) It's less disruptive for other workteams

24 Which of the following is not a function of consultants involved in team development?

(a) To find out from each individual involved the things which they feel are impairing the functioning of the workteam

(b) To get the group together and tell them what everyone thinks without saying who gave them the information

(c) To get the group to discuss the things which are affecting their performance honestly and openly

(d) To suggest solutions to the problems which are affecting workteam performance

END CHECK - Checkout

Audio tape
Side 2
Time guide
30 mins

The answers and explanations for these End Checks are on Side 2 of our Audio Tape. Have your responses with you as you play this tape. As you listen you can check out how well you have done and make notes as you proceed.

2 Tutor Check

Time guide
60 mins

Read through the following case incident and then answer the questions that follow.

There's been a lot of trouble in your workteam lately. The team members have been arguing over who is given overtime. Some of them also feel that a similar group is being given preferential treatment when overtime arises. You've tried to be fair in your allocation, knowing that one of your workteam has been coping with a very sick parent at home, you've intentionally not approached this person to work overtime. It seems that some of the other members of your team who prefer the time off resent this and see this as preferential treatment. One of them said to you the other day, "We all have our problems at home - only some of us try not to bring them to work".

1 Identify the kinds of conflict that are going on in the workteam. Briefly describe each one.

2 Suggest some possible approaches to improving relations within the group.

3 Decide the approach or approaches you would use and give your reasons.

4 What do we mean by the term group cohesion?

5 How might team development improve group cohesion?

Send to Tutor

Now get your answers to your study tutor either by post or handing it over personally. You will receive your tutor's assessment and comment back through the post as soon as can be managed.

3 Work-based project

Time guide
60 mins

(1) Try to identify as many social, work-related and game playing roles as you can which are operating within your workteam. List them under each of our three groupings. Express them any way you like.

(2) Try to list the sorts of pressures which operate within your workteam to get individuals to conform to group norms.

(3) List as many of the group norms as you can identify.

(4) Briefly describe how you think the nature of the firm in which you work affects the nature of the work groups within it, including your own.

Send to
Tutor

Now get your answers to your study tutor either by post or handing it over personally. You will receive your tutor's assessment and comment back through the post as soon as can be managed.

PART F UNIT REVIEW

1 Return to Objectives

Having completed your work on this unit, let's review how you feel about each of our four opening objectives. I'll repeat them here and add comment.

You will be better able to

* **ASSESS HOW INDIVIDUALS AND THE NATURE OF THE WORKPLACE AFFECT WORKTEAMS**

In the first two parts of our unit we saw the ways in which individual and organisational qualities affect workteams. Later on, we looked at the sorts of performance we could expect from workteams affected by these things. If our work in the unit has helped you to improve your understanding of these things then you've achieved this objective. Now to our next objective -

You will be better able to

* **DEAL WITH THE GROUP FORCES WHICH AFFECT THE PERFORMANCE OF A WORKTEAM**

Throughout this unit we've looked at workteams as social groups which influence individuals in them. We've seen that the social pressures of groups can be both good and bad. We've suggested various approaches to the problems that can arise and the various examples scattered throughout the text should help you to identify the ways in which we can get these pressures to work for, rather than against, us. If we've helped to give you new ideas about ways of dealing with problems that arise in workteams then you've achieved this objective.

Our third objective says

You will be better able to

* **BUILD UP AN EFFECTIVE TEAM OF PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE THE SAME THINGS**

In the last part of our unit we concentrated on team-building and improving work performance. But we've talked about making workteams more effective throughout the text. If you now feel better able to understand the things which help people to mesh as a team then you've achieved this objective.

Now to our last objective

You will be better able to

* HANDLE CONFLICT POSITIVELY

Handling conflict is one of the hardest things you have to do as a supervisor. We've seen that it is not necessarily destructive but, left unresolved or handled badly, it is likely to grow as a problem which undermines the performance of your workteam. Handling conflict well depends on an understanding of all the sometimes complex issues of personality, motivation and the balance of roles achieved in the workteam which we've looked at in this unit.

I hope that this work you have done was enjoyable and useful enough to encourage you to continue in your studies.

2 Extensions

I recommend that you take up as many of these extensions as you can. They will further increase your understanding and interest. You will also be able to check out a number of ideas that I mention in the unit. The extra time and effort will prove very worthwhile.

EXTENSION 1

Choice Unit: Number 39: Quality Circles

Author: Ysanne M Carlisle

Publisher: Northern Regional Management Centre

EXTENSION 2

Book: Industrial Organisation Theory and Practice

Author: Sean Woodward

Publisher: Oxford University Press

EXTENSION 3

Video: "Love or Money"

Number 4 in the BBC "Supervisor" Series.

This video shows a number of different sorts of groups and shows how different supervisors have approached the problems of getting the best effort from them. In many cases this requires work groups to be workteams in conditions which are not necessarily the most favourable for effective workteams.

EXTENSION 4

Choice Unit: Number 11: Needs and Rewards

Author: R Ellingham

Publisher: Northern Regional Management Centre

EXTENSION 5

Choice unit: Number 14: Team Leading

Author: W Tait

Publisher: Northern Regional Management Centre

These extension opportunities can all be taken up via your Support Centre.

They will either have the materials or will arrange that you have access to the materials. However it may be more convenient to check out the materials with your Personnel or Training people at work - they may well give you access. There are other good reasons for approaching your own people, for example they will become aware of your interest and you can involve them in your development.

3 References

REFERENCE 1	Book:	Behavioural Sciences for Managers
	Author:	Boot, Cowling et al
	Publisher:	Macmillan
REFERENCE 2	Book:	The Behaviour of Industrial Work Groups
	Author:	L R Sayles
	Publisher:	Wiley
REFERENCE 3	Book:	Games People Play
	Author:	Eric Berne
	Publisher:	Penguin Books
REFERENCE 4	Book:	Understanding Organisations
	Author:	C B Handy
	Publisher:	Penguin Books

These references can all be taken up via your Support Centre. They will either have the materials or will arrange that you have access to the materials. However check with your Personnel or Training people at work - they may well give you access. There are other good reasons for approaching your own people, for example they will become more aware of your interest and you can involve them in your development.

If you do wish to make use of these references then don't think that you must read them right through. Just dip into them for a slightly wider treatment of the topic raised by the unit.

I should warn that the language and style of the writing is often difficult to cope with. So don't struggle with it too much. Do what I do when in difficulty, put the book back on the shelf and find a better one!

THE CHOICE SERIES

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF SUPERVISION

11 Needs and Rewards
12 Enriching Work
13 Workteams
14 Team Leading
15 Leading Change
16 Organisation Systems
17 Supervising in the System
18 Supervising with Authority
19 Workplace Control
20 Taking Decisions

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF SUPERVISION

30 Looking at Figures
32 Using Graphs
33 Method Study
34 Easy Statistics
35 Quality Control
37 Controlling Output
38 Value Analysis
39 Quality Circles
40 Computers
41 Stores Control
42 Managing Time
43 Descriptive Statistics
45 Supervisors & Marketing

COMMUNICATION

60 Communicating
61 Speaking Skills
62 Writing Skills
63 Communication Systems
64 Orders and Instructions

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS

70 Accounting for Money
71 Control via Budgets
72 Cost Reduction
73 Wage Payment Systems
74 The National Economy

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

80 Training Plans
81 Training Sessions
82 Discipline and the Law
84 Health and Safety
85 Industrial Relations in Action
86 Equality at Work
87 Hiring People
88 Supervising and the Law